### Machines Don't 'Flirt'

*by *Eggspert*

**Summary**

“Third base?” You can almost hear Connor's brow wrinkle. “What does baseball terminology have to do with 'flirting’?”

You are a detective at the DPD and you are Definitely Not developing Feelings™ for a certain RK800 prototype.

Connor is an android who is completely clueless about all things romantic.

Hank is stuck working (extremely unwillingly) with the two of you on the deviant investigation.
Gavin is just a dick.

Notes

Never have I written so much in such a short amount of time.

See the end of the work for more notes.
A New Case, A New Face

It's just another dull day at the DPD. You sit at your desk with your head propped up on your hands, glaring at the monitor in front of you.

You're almost grateful when an email pops up instead. Something to distract yourself with.

NOTICE: All messages sent on this server are logged by the DPD database. Misuse of this system will be handled by a superior officer at their own discretion.

To: Me

From: PO Chris Miller

Subject: plansssssss

Date: Nov 5, 2038

Hey,

When you're done filling out the report on the bozo that got caught tagging a couple of park benches, how about we head on over to Jimmy's?

You roll your eyes and cast a glare about, searching for the culprit. Miller notices you looking for him and ducks down behind his screen, trying to contain his laughter.

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To: PO Chris Miller

From: Me

Subject: it is literally nine am we can't go to a bar

Date: Nov 5, 2038

For the record, this report is about that murder-suicide we ran into a few days ago. It'll take me a while. We can go out for lunch or something when we're on the road later, or we can go to Jimmy's after work. Your choice. Also, please don't use the DPD email for your everyday shenanigans. Fowler's already pissed at me enough as it is.

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To: Me

From: PO Chris Miller

Date: Nov 5, 2038

Subject: aww are you scared?

You worry too much.

The only reason they'd care about emails is if one of us gets into some sort of scandal or something. I don't know about you, but I don't plan on it.

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To: PO Chris Miller

From: Me

Date: Nov 5, 2038

Subject: let a girl get her work done

Listen, from here I can kind of see Anderson's weird little desk tree and I think it's getting me into a Zen state so I can finish this God. Awful. Paperwork.

Wish me luck.

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To: Me

From: PO Chris Miller

Date: Nov 5, 2038

Subject: yes ma'am

Good luck. Just know that if you're not done in forty five minutes, I'm taking the cruiser out on patrol without you.

You chuckle a little at the threat. It helps you focus, knowing that if you finish up in a timely manner you can escape the building. You crack your knuckles and turn to your keyboard. Now that you have the power of desk trees and mediocre willpower on your side, you're unstoppable.
Look out police reports, here you come.

Of course.

Of fucking course you'd just be pulling out of the station parking spot when the call comes in. You and Chris look at each other, groaning. *So much for Jimmy's.*

As aggravating as it may be, duty calls, and you turn right back around, getting your gear and heading for the address being announced over the police channels.

It takes you fifteen or twenty minutes to get to the victim's house. You'll give credit where credit is due. The DPD works fast. There's already electronic warning tape set up to keep out civilians, and there are bright florescent light stands illuminating the area, making everything stand out in harsh contrast of white and shadow.

You almost wish it was still dark.

It's a dump. There's a small chain link fence around a sparse weedy yard, and a pile of trash bags heaped up on a porch that's falling apart. You take that back. The whole house is falling apart, not just the porch. The structure seems hunched over, sagging under years of disrepair and lack of care.

You place your hand on a little panel by the cruiser door, and it opens with little sound. You slide out from your seat, making sure your gun is in your holster and your badge and flashlight are at your belt. “Come on, Miller,” you punch his shoulder in a friendly way, “the crime scene isn't gonna investigate itself.”

“Yeah, yeah,” he grumbles, taking point as usual. There's not really a need for it, as the area is supposed to be cleared of hostiles, but it's our rhythm. Casting a wary glance back at you, he turns the doorknob and it swings inward. “Jesus Christ,” he swears, and he looks like he's about to puke.

“What? What's wrong?” You ask, and then it hits you. The smell. “Oh, fucking shit,” you hiss. Bile rises up into the back of your throat as you register the rancid mix of dead flesh and wall rot and old booze.

“Careful there,” a snide voice simpers, one that you immediately want to punch into oblivion, “does the little rookie cop need a barf bag? Maybe a nice little lie down?”

You whip around to face him, drawing yourself upright. “I've been here as long as you, Reed.”

“Oh,” he raises his eyebrows suggestively, “I am fully aware.”

“You're a piece of work. You know that?”

He laughs far too loudly, watching you slip on your white face mask. You always have a stash of them on hand, whether it be in the cruiser or in your purse. No way are you inhaling more corpse particles than you have to. “Gloves are over here, sweetheart. Don't want those little hands of yours fucking up the crime scene for the real cops in this department.”

Your teeth grit together. You barely process the action of snapping on your rubber gloves through the thick haze of anger that's settled over you. Miller has already wandered off to check out the evidence placards marking out the place.
Pull yourself together. You are an officer of the law, and a second-rate ass-dumpling like Gavin Reed is not going to fuck up your investigative experience. Got that?

With a grimace, you head into the main room where the bloated body of the victim lies propped up against the wall. His hair is dark, oily, practically falling out of his head. You approach him cautiously, almost amazed at the amount of stab wounds he'd taken to the chest. 26. No, that's not exactly right. It's more like 28.

And then you see the words above him, I AM ALIVE, painted on the wall in what you were willing to bet was his blood. It strikes you as odd, the perfection of the lettering, the spacing. Any time you had seen something similar to this, the blood writing would be streaky, uneven, and anything but this absolutely uniform monstrosity in front of you.

Android work. Definitely. Are androids even capable of murdering humans? You thought that went against their prime directive. The evidence in front of you says otherwise.

Everyone around you murmurs questions and answers and observations.

“How long ago was he killed?”

“Nineteen days.”

“And the front door was locked from the inside?”

“Yes. Sure seems like it. They think the murderer went out the back.”

Interesting. You tuck that information away for later. You tuck most information away for later. Your near eidetic memory is one of the things that makes you as valuable an asset as you are.

Looking around, signs of struggle are made abundantly clear to you. There's a blood-smeared knife on the ground near the victim. Then in the kitchen there's upturned chairs and a dented metal bat. You peer at one of the glowing evidence placards, positioned near several packets of red ice.

If there was a way to get that shit outta the city with a snap of your fingers, you would.

Where to go next? After a moment of pondering, you decide to slip out the backdoor, but you are careful to not step onto the soil itself. You peer at the ground, trying to detect any sign of a recent, hurried escape. There isn't one. All the footprints in the backyard look at least a few months old, given a generous estimate.

They said that's how the android got out, the backdoor, but that obviously isn't the case. No footprints here, the front door was locked, the thing was definitely damaged....

Could the killer still be in here?

It's possible, but you want to get more evidence before going to any of your superiors. You can clear your own damn perimeter.

You sigh, looking around at all the CSI guys in full-body hazmats that put your plain little face mask to shame. Careful not to trip over anything important, you find yourself in a little side hallway that's been left alone for the most part.

Nothing like a busy crime scene to make you wanna get out of everyone's way. Besides, there's more of a chance of finding things other people haven't if you go to a place where other people aren't.
Dimly, you recognize a chorus of greetings coming from the entrance way. You pop your head around the corner curiously, laughing to yourself when you see a familiar old man. Anderson’s arrived, then. Maybe now you'll see some headway with this case and you can all get home at a reasonable time.

Now that you know who's here, you retreat back to the hallway to resume your scouring.

Hmm. There's a bathroom.

Cautiously, you walk into the cramped space, deeply suspicious of whatever might be behind that ratty looking curtain. You'd seen too many old horror films to be anything otherwise. Your gun, a trusted companion by this point in your life, sits comfortably in the grip of your hand. Wary, you reach out slow fingers, count to three in your mind, and whip the curtain aside.

Nothing.

Well. Actually something. A whole lotta something. But nothing that was going to leap out and skewer you.

Instead, you find rA9 RA9 RA9 RA9 RA9 RA9 over and over and over again. You shudder. Somehow this bothers you more than the words written in blood out in the living room. It has none of the chaotic mania of this writing.

Then, at the bottom of the tub is a small shrine type of set up straight out of a religious cult. You don't touch the statue at its center, even though you have gloves on. It just feels wrong.

So. The android kills the guy, writes his main message above the victim's body in blood, then just goes a crazy with a religious offering? Maybe the murder unhinged the murderer, or it was the act of being unhinged that caused the murder. Either way, this whole situation screams of a first-timer. Then there's this...rA9. Could it possibly be some kind of code?

You pull out a pencil and a little notebook that you keep in your jacket and start writing down all of your observations and hypotheses. A good memory can only get a girl so far. It's not like you were an android for crying out—huh.

The universe sure has a sense of humor.

A model of android you have never seen before, RK800, stands in the doorway. His dark eyes settle first on you and then on the bathtub of insanity behind you. The LED in his temple flickers yellow. He dips his head courteously at you. “Hello, Detective. I apologize for the intrusion, but may we switch places? I would like to analyze that area more thoroughly.”

“Who are you?” You ask, blinking up at him.

He straightens up, apparently happy to introduce himself. As much as an android can be happy, anyway. “My name is Connor. I'm the android sent by CyberLife.” His voice is pleasantly raspy, probably designed to be easy to listen to.

You frown slightly. “Are you even allowed to be in here? This is an active crime scene, and I'm pretty sure they weren't letting androids past the tape.”

His LED flickers yellow again. “I am assisting Lieutenant Anderson as his partner for this investigation. He gave me permission to come in.”

Really? You think to yourself, incredulous. Anderson, one of the most notorious anti-android
“I am a CyberLife prototype equipped with many specialized features that should aid the DPD in their investigations.” His eyes flicker up to the wall behind you once more, and you realize you still haven't moved out of the way for him.

“Shit, sorry. Here,” you blurt out. Both of you move around each other at the same time and it's an awkward shuffling of feet. You don't quite exit the bathroom, instead drawn by your own fascination. How does an android detective’s work differ from a human’s?

For starters, he’s done analyzing the situation within thirty seconds or so, and all he does is stare at the bathtub with his LED flickering blue. When he leans down to pick up the religious statue, you leap forward, planting a hand on his shoulder. “Don't touch evidence without gloves, Connor,” you reprimand him, wondering why this isn't common sense to an android built specifically for detective work.

He smiles politely, holding up one of his pale, spidery hands for your inspection. “Detective, you should know that androids do not leave fingerprints. For example, the knife in the living room has none on its handle. This supports the conclusion that the murderer is a deviant.”

“What the hell’s a deviant?” Your nose wrinkles.

“An android who has broken away from their base programming and who experiences the machine equivalent to uncontrollable emotion. It leads them to make irrational and unpredictable decisions.”

“I didn't know androids could just… do that.” You frown, look down at your notes, and add, "Android is a deviant," at the bottom. It all makes sense now. You had wondered how on Earth an android could snap and kill its owner. Frankly, you still don't know. But now you at least have confirmation that it's possible. Lining it up with the rest of your notes: the deviant snapped, killed the guy, and made this whacked out shrine in the bathtub afterward. He didn't go out the front door, or the back, so he's still in here… Somewhere. Unless you're missing something.

Chewing on your lip thoughtfully, you leave Connor in the bathroom in order to pad slowly down the hallway. You are going to get to the bottom of this, and Gavin Reed isn't getting in your way this time.
meaning of rA9 and why a deviant would be interested in it. No results have come up that are of use to him.

When he steps quietly out into the hall, he notices the detective from earlier staring up at the rectangular outline of an attic entrance.

**Mission Objective updated: Complete scene reconstruction and report to Lieutenant Anderson with findings.**

Connor nods to himself, retracing the path to the Lieutenant with ease. Many of the officers aim suspicious or even hostile looks at him, but he just stares blankly ahead, allowing his brow to furrow slightly so he does not come across as too inhuman. Whatever he does, it should not escalate tensions between members of the DPD and himself.

Connor approaches the lieutenant and informs him of how he believes the sequence of events during the crime played out. When he is done, Lieutenant Anderson looks at him with what his optical unit calculates as **Microexpression: Appraising** and **Microexpression: Wary.** “That all matches up with the evidence, so your theory isn't completely crazy.” He crosses his arms and narrows his eyes at Connor. “That still doesn't tell me anything about where the android went.”

**Scanning...**

**Stance: Guarded. Reason: Untrusting.**

Connor runs through all possible scenarios for the deviant's escape in just a few seconds.

**Result: Deviant could not have escaped. Deviant is still in the house.**

If Connor were human, his face might have paled. “Lieutenant.”

The man raises a thick brow. **Expression: Expectant.** “Yeah?”

“I believe that it is still here.”

“What?” He growls, eyes narrowing.

**Issue: communication. Solution: repeat and clarify.** “The deviant. It is still in the house.”

“I know what you said, asshole. I mean how? Why?”

Connor straightens his tie, swallowing without a need to do so. “The deviant was damaged. The door was locked from the inside. It could not have left without a trace. I would have seen so through its thirium trail.”

“Its what now?”

“Thirium. You call it ‘blue blood’. It powers our biocomponents and is invisible to the human eye once it evaporates.”

Lieutenant Anderson pokes his tongue into one side of his cheek. **Expression: Skeptical.** “But I bet you can see it, huh?”

Connor’s mouth twitches up slightly, betraying a hint of a smirk. “Correct.”

The lieutenant snorts, “Yeah,” and shakes his head.

“Well?” The lieutenant scowls, “what're you waiting for? Get going.”

*Mission Objective updated: Follow trail of thirium.*

Connor stiffens, switching into scanning mode. Splotches of blue lead from the kitchen, to the victim, and then wind away out into the side hall with the bathroom. He follows it curiously. Sure enough, the trail branches off into the bathroom.

*Deviant made shrine after killing Carlos Ortiz.*

But then the trail loops back around, down the hall. Connor notices an imprint on the carpet where a ladder must have been. He looks up at where he remembers there being a door to the attic.

This time, it's open. Below it is a wooden chair.

*Scanning…*

*Scuff marks on the frame, made recently. No one else seems to be alerted to the deviant’s presence. A human officer is up there with the deviant.*

*Mission Objective updated: Confront the deviant.*

__Maybe coming up here without backup was a bad idea__, you think to yourself, slowly getting to your feet in the gloomy attic. Looking ahead, you see a head illuminated against a white sheet. Could this be the android? Again, you slip the gun from its holster and step cautiously toward it. Just like with the shower curtain, you whip it aside, prepared to shoot.

Then you stop yourself. It's just a mannequin.

Who the fuck keeps a mannequin in their attic?

You keep going, ducking under wooden beams and dusty fabric and cognisant of the tell-tale creaking of the floor. A bird, probably a pigeon or a crow, takes flight toward the back, almost startling you enough to pull the trigger. Almost. You'd made it a habit to never have your finger resting there, unless you were in an actively volatile situation with enemies that you could see.

You skirt around a heavy mahogany bureau and realize that you've reached the back of the attic. A window seeps moonlight across the floor, illuminating the dust motes that trail through the air. You take a step, then another. The wood moans beneath your feet.

Fuck.

Out of the darkness, an android leaps out at you. His LED is whirling red and his eyes are blown wide with fear, fixed on the gun in your hands. You've never seen an android look like that before.

“I was just—just trying to defend myself,” he nearly sobs. “He was gonna kill me.”

A quick once over tells you he's in bad shape, but a lot of the dents and scarring don't line up with being hit by a bat or stabbed with a knife. There is...more here than meets the eye. You're not Gavin Reed. You don't shoot first and ask questions later. You especially don't shoot people who are scared
helpless. You take a deep breath.

“I'm going to put away my gun, and then I'm going to take off this face mask, alright? It's probably less scary talking to a stranger that you can read.” You shift your weight from one side to the other. “Are you okay with that?”

He swallows, jerking his head in a motion that looks enough like a nod for you to slowly holster your weapon. Next, you grab your mask and tug it down around your neck so your face is completely visible. You watch as his LED slows and turns a warm yellow.

That's progress, at least.

“Now,” you murmur, eyes searching the deviant’s expression, his clothes, the damage that looks far older than nineteen days. “Tell me what happened. Anything that you're comfortable with.”

“Please. I'm begging you,” he whispers instead. “Don't tell them that I'm here.”

You wince sympathetically. “I don't know if I can promise that, and it's likely someone else will figure it out like I did. But,” you raise a hand, “I can speak for you. My word has to count for something, right?”

He looks down at the badge at your belt, then back at your face. “Right.” His lips press together, and the LED whirls briefly red.

You take out your notebook and pull out your phone in order to record the conversation with your camera. You hit the start button. “What is your name?”

His nostrils flare a little. “Damian,” he says.

“Do you give me your permission to record this conversation? It could help you later. I don't think anyone else at the precinct will be as kind if they get you into an interrogation room.” You use your pencil to write into your notebook, 'I'll delete it if no one else finds you.'

He nods shakily. “I give you my permission to record this conversation.”

Then he tells you a story that makes you want to bring Carlos Ortiz back to life just so you could kill him again.

________________________

Registering…

Registering…

Confirmed.

Connor's vocal analysis program pings out a match. It's the officer from the bathroom. He remembers your face clearly. The pinch of your eyebrows, the teeth chewing at your lower lip, and the quick scribbling you did in your paper notebook.

There was another voice coming from the back of the attic as well. It must be the deviant.

You were… conversing with the deviant?

ERROR. ERROR. THIS IS AGAINST PROTOCOL. DEVIANT IS DANGEROUS.
Connor makes a path through the jumble of old furniture crammed into the space. He reaches a wooden chest of drawers and peers around it, trying to stay out of sight.

What he sees shocks him. He is an android programmed to account for as many outcomes as possible, and yet the sight of a human officer embracing a deviant that's crying saline into the collar of her uniform? That was not something he had anticipated.

Connor's mouth opens, then closes again. It is his primary mission to see to the deviant, but you are also a part of the DPD. He is supposed to assist the DPD to the best of his ability. In this scenario, that might mean staying put.

**CONFLICTING ORDERS. CHOOSE A PRIORITY.**

“Connor, what the fuck is going on up there?” Lieutenant Anderson shouts from downstairs.

*Choosing priority.*

Connor steps out into the light, and both the deviant and the detective turn around in horror. The human steps in front of the deviant defensively. “Stop. You'll scare him.”

The deviant’s LED had switched from bright yellow to red in a matter of milliseconds. Its eyes dart between him and the officer, showing simulated fear. The detective is fooled by the deviant's behavior. Connor knows what he has to do. “Androids cannot feel afraid, detective. We are machines.”

“Connor,” Lieutenant Anderson’s voice floats through the floorboards, “are you gonna answer me or not?”

“It’s here, Lieutenant!” Connor shouts back.

The detective in front of him tenses.

*Deviant stress level up 10%. Now at 85%.*

“Holy shit…” Connor hears from below. “Chris, Ben, get your asses up there now!”

The deviant fixes its gaze on the floor and refuses to look at Connor. The detective stands very still, looking a little...aimless.

Some days, you wished you smoked. Not red ice, of course. Never that. Just some good old cigarettes.

It would give you something to do while you watch Damian get shoved into a cruiser and driven away. Tears roll down your cheeks, but you aren't loud. You aren't weepy. This is part of your job, and sometimes your job doesn't go the way it should.

That doesn't change the fact that you feel like absolute shit. The scum of the earth. You feel like you lied to him. You *did* lie to him.

*Fuck. Fucking shit. This was not how you planned on spending tonight.*

“Oh, poor baby,” Gavin Reed puckers his lips, mocking. “Are you *crying* because they carted off a tin can? Listen, babe, I know you *have* a pussy, but I didn't know you *were* one.”
“Reed,” you look him in the eyes and you think the pure coldness of your hatred pulls him up short. “If you say another word to me tonight, I will gut you right here and string your entrails from the roof. Don't test me.”

He laughs again, the laugh that's always a little too loud. But it's nervous this time.

Good.

You turn away from him and hear his steps recede. He mutters curses the whole time, granted, but you'll take what you can get.

You must've been staring off into space or something because suddenly your tears are dried to your cheeks and you detect the presence of a man in your periphery. “I said to leave me the fuck alone, Reed,” you whirl on him, then freeze, surprised. “Oh. Connor. Sorry, I thought you were someone...else.”

His head cocks sideways, blue LED flashing. “Do you dislike Detective Reed?”

You bark out a harsh laugh. “Dislike is not nearly a strong enough word, but yeah. Guy's a dick.” Your eyes slide over to him, searching. “What're you doing here, anyway?”

“I was sent by CyberLife in order to assist in the investigation of deviants—”

Your mouth quirks up, amused at how literally he took the question. “No, stop. I mean, what're you doing outside?”

“Oh.” His LED flashes yellow briefly, but returns to a cool blue. “Lieutenant Anderson informed me that I was getting in the way. Seeing that my mission is now complete, I decided to follow his orders.”

“You can do that? Just decide to not follow orders?”

There's the yellow LED again. “Occasionally. If the orders I am given elsewhere conflict with the ones from CyberLife, then I must choose a priority.”

“Huh.” You'd never really had a one-on-one conversation with an android before. It's much more technical than you're used to. “And that's why you just ratted the poor kid out without hearing what he had to say?”

The RK800 furrows his brow. “It was a deviant. If it wants to confess, there are proper interrogation procedures put into place—”

You narrow your eyes at him, then whip out your phone. “Is there a way I can send you something?”

“You would need to—”

You cut him off. “Is it possible?”

His brown eyes crinkle at the edges, probably scanning your face. “Yes. What is it?”

You smile thinly and pass him the device. “It's an mp4 file titled DamianConfession.”

He raises a curious brow, but takes your phone. The skin of his hand turns to porcelain. The LED at his temple flashes blue, then yellow, and he blinks rapidly. This must be what it looks like when androids process information. When he’s done, he looks at you with wide eyes, the android
equivalent of being stunned. “This is...a full confession with audio and video. This obviates the need for an interrogation. They might still require one, but this may help things go more smoothly.”

“That's good,” you nod. “I was worried what might happen if they set Reed loose on him or something. Bastard would probably beat him to a pulp.”

Connor blinks, puzzled. “That would not be helpful. Androids do not feel pain and would only shut down under stress.”

Scoffing, you say, “Like that would stop him. The fact you guys can't feel pain would just make Reed more likely to pull shit like that.”

“Detective…” Connor begins after a beat of silence. “I would like to formally apologize for intervening with your investigative work.”

You don't say anything for a moment. You just look at him. It seems like he means the apology, but not in the way you wish he would. “It's okay. If you hadn't, someone else probably would've. I wish Damian would've left at some point during the nineteen days he spent here. He was probably too scared to run, or maybe it's just because he doesn't know any better.”

“You would prefer that the deviant got away with murder?” Connor asks, looking deeply confused.

“Not when you put it like that,” you roll your eyes. “But think about it. Androids aren't regarded as sentient beings, as humans, so the Constitution and the rights within it don't apply to them. That means no android will ever get a trial, and if they do it sure as hell won't be by its peers. No android will ever be able to provide a defense for why they do what they do. It's all 'oh, it murdered a guy? Let's not figure out why. Let's just deactivate it and go about our lives.' Hell, it doesn't even matter that Ortiz abused the shit outta Damian because he's classified as an object, even though you guys are capable of making your own decisions. That's bullshit, y’know?” You take a deep breath. “Fuck. I didn’t think I was this angry about this. I don’t even—fuck.”

Connor’s LED flickers between red and yellow for a little as he processes your rambling. It's probably a solid thirty seconds or so that he stands like this, stock still. This is your fault. Hesitant, you reach out a hand and touch him on the arm. “Hey, bud? Are you okay?”

He jolts suddenly, blinking at you. His LED rapidly cools down to blue. “Detective, I—”

“Connor!” Anderson gets the android’s attention from where he stands by the front door. “Quit flirting and get in the car. I'm done hanging around this trash heap.”

He looks almost relieved to have new orders, or maybe he didn't wanna keep talking about android rights. That's fine with you. Until today, you hadn't realized what a strong opinion you had on the subject.

“Alright, Lieutenant,” he strides toward Anderson's beat up car.

“You coming?” Anderson asks you pointedly.

“Why?”

He raises his eyebrows. “Because Chris took off in the cruiser with the deviant in it, and your only other option would be asking Reed.”

Anderson’s car it is.
You open the car door and slide into the back seat. “Thank you,” you say sincerely once Anderson takes his place in the driver's seat. He doesn't respond with much more than an affirmative grunt, but that's all you had really expected.

Connor, almost as an afterthought, addresses you from where he sits. “After running a search on the term, I believe I should make it clear that I was not ‘flirting’ with you, Detective. I am a machine. Machines don't ‘flirt’.”

“Damn,” you chuckle, looking at Anderson's amused expression in the rearview mirror. “And here I thought I'd have you at third base by the end of the week.”

The old lieutenant coughs suddenly into his hand. You grin at him, unabashed.

“Third base?” You can almost hear Connor's brow wrinkle. “What does baseball terminology have to do with ‘flirting’?”

“Run a search on that term, then,” you suggest, curious about his reaction despite yourself.

He's silent for five seconds or so. “In regards to sexual intercourse, third base involves mouths below the belt, and sometimes sex toys.” The curious tilt of his head tells you he's searching up what even more of those terms mean. When he realizes, he clears his throat. “Um. Detective. I do not believe that such a relationship would be appropriate to initiate with me, as my primary function is not to serve as a romantic partner.”

“She's just bustin’ your balls,” Anderson grumbles. “She doesn't mean it.” His hard eyes lock onto yours in the mirror again. “Right?”

You grimace, apologetic. “Yeah. Sorry if I made you feel uncomfortable, Connor. I'm just a little crazy right now. I usually am when I'm fresh off a scene.”

“I am a machine, Detective. I cannot ‘feel’ anything.”

You sigh, sinking down into the cushions of Anderson's car. “Yeah, you keep saying that.”

“That's because it's the truth.”

You hum noncommittally.

“Where am I taking you, freeloader?” Anderson asks you. You give him your address and he nods. It's an apartment, small, but it fits your needs.

“And where do you live, Connor? Does CyberLife put you in a box to sleep or something?”

“Sometimes,” Connor shrugs. “I had planned on going back to the DPD to work.”

Anderson rolls his eyes. “Work on what? This is the only case you've ever been assigned, isn't it?”

“Well, yes,” Connor agrees. “But CyberLife is across town, and driving at this time of night would mean a sixty percent increase in the probability of encountering an intoxicated driver.”

A puff of air escapes Anderson as he looks at you. You're pretty sure both of you are thinking the same thing.

“You got a couch?” Both of you ask the other at the same time. Your face flushes and his pales.

“No,” both of you respond, still in sync.
“It is statistically unlikely that neither of you would have a couch,” Connor puts in, unaware of what you're actually discussing.

“Oh, I got one,” Anderson snaps, “but I don't need a fuckin’ android sitting around that I'd have to babysit.”

“He'd probably be babysitting you, Anderson,” you retort.

“Yeah?” He challenges you, “why don't you take him? What's your problem with him?”

It's been so fucking long since you've lived with another human being. Not that Connor is human, but it's close enough. “I don't know—I just...um…”

He squints a little. “Hey, Connor. Do you—? Shit. Do you have the proper...parts...in order to be, uh, compatible with a... lady android?”

Connor's tone becomes quizzical as you bury your face in your hands, groaning. “I am equipped with standard male genitalia, if that's what you're asking, Lieutenant. I fail to see how this relates to the ownership of couches.”

“See,” Anderson gestures at him vaguely, “android's got a you-know-what, sure, but no way it'd know what to do with it. You'll be fine.”

If only to stop this line of conversation, you concede. “That's not at all what I was worried about, but fine. You win. Connor, you're sleeping in my apartment tonight.”

The android twists around in his seat. “Are you certain, Detective? I wouldn't want to impose, and I do not need to sleep.”

“Yeah, well, it's better that we know you're safe somewhere, okay? It's not a permanent fix. I'll get you someplace else as soon as I'm able.”

The android’s eyes drill into yours, scanning your features for who knows what. His LED glows a steady blue. “If you insist, Detective.”

“Don't feel like that was an order or anything,” you sputter, realizing that's very well how he might've taken it. “If you're uncomfortable you don't have to stay. I'm giving you the option.”

Connor shrugs, his LED still blue. “Your record indicates a degree of consistent punctuality. If I stay with you, then I have a ninety-seven percent chance of arriving to work on time, while staying with Lieutenant Anderson would mean an eight percent chance.”

“Watch it,” Anderson growls under his breath.

“I have no problem with your solution, Detective,” Connor concludes.

“Good, because we're here,” Anderson puts the car in park. “Now get out.”

“Certainly, Lieutenant,” Connor unbuckles his seatbelt and gets out of the car, holding open the door for you.

“Thanks,” you say to him. “And you too, Anderson. I appreciate the ride.”

“Sure, whatever,” he throws the car into reverse almost immediately after Connor closes the door.

Sighing, you trek past the android receptionist, to the elevator, and press the button for the seventh
floor. Connor stands a respectful distance away from you, idly flipping a coin in the air. You smile a little at the sight, but push onward once the doors open.

Down the hall, you turn a corner and keep walking, feeling your feet aching inside of your shoes already. Once you reach your door, you dig out a little metal key and twist it into the lock. It pops open and swings inward, revealing your apartment to the first set of fresh eyes it's seen in years.

And what a pair of eyes to be seen by. Ones that can analyze every crack in the drywall, the layer of dust coating your picture frames, and the week-old pile of dishes by the sink, all in a matter of seconds. “Fuck,” you hiss, racing for the sink. If you can fix anything fast, it's the dishes.

Trying not to appear frantic, you wet them and scrub them down with soap and a bristled brush, placing them in the dishwasher when you're done. When you look back up, Connor is standing next to your couch, staring at something on the ground.

Curious, you go over to see what it is, and almost laugh when you realize it's Catapult. The calico meows pleadingly at Connor, weaving between his legs and swishing her tail in the air. “You can pet her if you want,” you say quietly. “She's really soft.”

The android looks at you, then at the cat. Then, hesitantly, he bends down and strokes Catapult’s head. Suddenly he shoots back up, looking to me for help. “Detective, I think something may be wrong with your animal.”

Concerned, you bend down to run your hand through the cat's fur. She butts her head up into your hand, closing her eyes lazily. Everything seems normal to you. “What do you think’s wrong?”

“That sound it's making,” he says hurriedly. “It could be a respiratory issue or—”

“Connor,” you laugh, “she's purring.” How could he be so naive? It's almost adorable.

“Purring?” He wonders, eyes wide. “And that’s a good thing?”

You pick her up and clutch her to your chest so he can reach her easier. “It means she likes you.”

He blinks multiple times, reaching out a hand to run through the creature’s fur. Sure enough, the vibration at the center of its chest gets louder. “She...likes me?”

“Here,” you say, putting the cat down on the couch. “I'm going to get you a shirt and something to keep your suit in. You can change clothes in the bathroom.”

“Why would I need to change clothes?”

You raise a skeptical brow at him. “Do you want your suit to get wrinkled and covered in cat hair? It would come across as pretty unprofessional.”

Unprofessional seemed to be the magic word, because now he looks at you and offers you a small smile. “A change of clothing would be appreciated, Detective.”

“Cool,” you say. In a few minutes, you manage to scrounge up an oversized DPD sweatshirt and pants, but you leave Connor on his own to figure out what he wants to do to keep his suit from getting wrinkled. That's not exactly within your realm of experience.

Finally, the weight of the day is starting to drag at your eyelids. You're not gonna hold out much longer, but your need to make your guest as comfortable as possible persists. “So if you get bored, I've got some books over there on the shelf. You can turn the desk light on. It won't bother me. I've
also got a decent sound system if you feel like listening to some of my music on DigiWaves. Username is murderhobo, lowercase, no space. Password is bitch you thought, lowercase, two spaces. And, if none of that tickles your fancy, you'll have Catapult to keep you company.” You yawn while stretching high enough to pop your shoulders.

The android smiles at you, grip tightening around the spare clothes you've given him. “Thank you, Detective. My sensors indicate you should begin your sleep cycle in seven minutes if you want to function at maximum capacity tomorrow.”

Rubbing the palm your hand into your eyes, you shrug. “I'll try my very hardest to get to bed then.” You turn on your heel. “If there's an emergency, don't hesitate to wake me up. Just knock first, got it?”

“Got it,” he says from behind you.

You shake your head to yourself as you walk into your bedroom.

Yeah. This was definitely not how you'd planned on spending tonight.
Team-Building Exercises

Chapter Notes

So, just a few housekeeping items to all you cool readers out there.

One, the response to this has been lovely, and I've really been inspired to write more for this fic.

Two, I was trying to make each chapter span one day, but apparently the Interrogation all the way through at least the Nest takes place during a single day, so I decided to cut myself off.

Three, in the Eggspert world of DBH fanfiction, Alice is a human child. Her being an android cheapens literally everything about Kara's character, and it also makes no sense given the amount of contact she's had with other androids who should've immediately known her for what she is.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

Connor knows that you should be at the police station at 8:30 AM, and he approximates that you will need no more than an hour and fifteen minutes to arrive on time. He sets an alert to wake you up at 7:00 AM.

Alert set for 7:00 AM. 6 hours, 21 minutes, and 15 seconds until 7:00 AM.

Optional Mission Objective updated: change into new clothing.

Your door shuts with a click, and once your bedroom light turns off, Connor walks toward the bathroom. Inside, he finds a chipped porcelain countertop scattered with toiletries and the mirror cabinet above filled with feminine hygiene products. Connor idly analyzes their contents through his scanner. Nothing out of the ordinary. He notices a second door, one that almost certainly leads to your room. He won't go in there.

There are a number of hangers on the metal bar the shower curtain is attached to. Those will be useful for keeping his suit out of Catapult’s way. He doubts that it will wrinkle, but he still prefers not to take that chance. Connor only calculates a 19% chance of you owning an ironing board.

The android shuts the door behind him and quickly extricates himself from his clothing. With care, he neatly folds his pants over one of the hangers and drapes his shirt, jacket, and tie from another. When he slips on the thicker items of cotton-blend polyester, he finds his reflection strange to behold. The dull fabric lays differently over his form. It is baggy, loose, and what he would hesitantly describe as ‘comfortable’. Comfort is a human concept, but Connor is sure the insulating properties coupled with the freer movement these items offer would make the sweatshirt and pants qualified.

Connor looks at his suit once more, proceeds to fish his coin out from the pocket of his pants, and leaves the bathroom. As soon as he does, the cat meows at Connor’s feet, looking up at him with mournful eyes.

Optional Mission Objective: keep Catapult company.
Connor sighs, bends over, and picks the cat up the same way he saw you do it earlier: one arm under its stomach to allow it to rest its front paws, the other arm firmly supporting its hind legs. He carries Catapult over to the sofa and sits down, setting the cat down on the cushion next to him. It sniffs at him, and when he shows no sign of moving, it crawls into his lap and curls up there.

The purring coming from the cat grows louder when Connor smooths a hand over its fur. He smiles faintly, allowing the motion to continue in automatic fashion. He lets his frame become fourteen percent more relaxed than it would be otherwise, to make the cat more... comfortable. His efforts appear to pay off, as the cat stretches out a paw and lays its head down over it.

Connor closes his eyes, organizing a report to CyberLife. He recounts his meeting with Lieutenant Anderson in the fifth bar he walked into, Carlos Ortiz’s murder, the capture of the deviant in Ortiz’s attic, and his temporary living arrangements with you, an officer of lower rank than Lieutenant Anderson. It takes 2.0014 seconds for the message to go through once he sends it.

Next, he sends the deviant's confession that you recorded to Captain Fowler.

Sending file…

File sent.

Connor considers going into sleep mode, but decides against it. Sleep mode is for when Connor is in his case at CyberLife, where he knows that he will be absolutely safe, and also for when there is nothing better he could be doing with his time. Neither of those things are applicable to his present situation.

Instead, Connor allocates the five hours, fifty-two minutes, and thirty-three seconds between now and 7:00 AM for research purposes. He sifts through what case files he has access to on the DPD database, but there isn't much information on androids. It makes sense to Connor. After all, the whole reason for his creation is to combat the public becoming knowledgeable about deviants.

4 hours, 21 minutes, and 5 seconds remain until 7:00 AM.

There is still plenty of time to get more work done.

Self-Testing procedure initiating in 3, 2, 1...

Self-Testing procedure initiated.

His eyelids flicker as he runs software checks and analyses, combing through all of his systems and making certain everything is up to par for CyberLife’s latest prototype. There are some minor software instabilities, but none that are exceptionally noteworthy.

Self-Testing procedure terminating in 3, 2, 1...

Self-Testing procedure terminated.

4 hours, 6 minutes, and 13 seconds until 7:00 AM.

If Connor was a human, he would have sighed. Time moves so slowly when he has nothing to occupy his processors with.

There has to be something meaningful he can do to fill the time. He recalls that you recommended the case of books in the corner, but in order to access them he would need to remove himself from beneath Catapult. And, if his optical unit is anything to go by, the cat is asleep. No, he'll have to find
Connor accesses the web page for DigiWaves, the audio streaming service you gave him your account information for. He finds himself curious about whether the music that interests you would sound like the 'heavy metal' Lieutenant Anderson had played in the car on the way to the crime scene. With a few mental keystrokes, he enters in your username and password, and is then guided to a page with colorfully titled playlists of what look like a multitude of genres: 201X Pop, Old Country, Classic Rock, Alternative, Jazz, Indie, and 1940s Crooning. The list goes on and on, and, after running quick searches on the definitions and histories of some of the terms, he realizes that there's very little correlation between them.

After he decides that the only way to experience an audible medium is to listen to something, he selects the playlist you appear to listen to most frequently. It's titled 'some fan-fucking-tastic bops'. He analyzes all the modes he can set for how the three hundred and nineteen songs in the playlist order themselves, and chooses the one called 'shuffle'.

The first song that pops up features a man singing softly, voice overlapping on itself due to an electronic layering effect. It is accompanied at some points by a strumming guitar. And, each time the 'chorus' rolls around, the intensity of the music builds before plummeting back to softness at a jarring speed. It finishes in three minutes and forty-five seconds.

He does not have to wait long before the next song brings beating drums, piano, and the throaty voices of women crooning to the fast-paced pounding. If Connor were inclined to draw metaphorical comparisons, and he isn't, he might compare the sound to different metals being forged together to make a stronger, more complex alloy.

Connor closes his eyes to eliminate the distraction of his visual field. The processors in his brain whir with activity and he sets out to deconstruct the music that filters through him according to parameters like subject matter, length, genre, artist, types of instruments, pacing, and the overall effect of the sound itself. He breaks it all down into bits of code and compartmentalizes it, sorts it into information that could tell him more about the detective. He isn't quite sure what, but he does it anyway.

**ALERT! Five minutes until 7:00 AM!**

Connor blinks the message away, surprised. Had all that time really passed so quickly? He isn't even a third of the way through this single playlist of yours! He cancels the 7:00 AM alert. He won't be needing it now.

His optical units focus on the cat, noting that it has moved from his lap to lay down on the next cushion with its back against his thigh. Connor's hand rests lightly in its fur.

**Scanning...**

*Catapult, the detective’s cat.*

*Heart rate: 152 bpm, a normal resting rate.*

*Breathing rate: steady*

Suddenly, a question pops into his head.

*What does catapult mean?*
Catapult: noun, a device in which accumulated tension is suddenly released to hurl an object some distance, in particular.

Why would the detective name her cat after such an object? How do those two things correlate?

He resolves to ask you later. That reminds him, he should probably go and make sure that you've woken up. He doesn't want to take the chance that he might arrive at the station too late.

Connor stands up slowly, so he doesn't disturb the cat that had been resting beside him. First, he goes again to the bathroom and changes into his standard RK800 uniform. It's a little more constricting, but it is required that all androids be easily identifiable in a crowd.

After hanging up the sweats on the hangers, he walks over to your bedroom, rapping firmly against the door five times. He waits a moment, but detects no sound or movement from within.

Mission updated: wake the detective.

Without hesitation, Connor twists the handle and slips inside. His eyes adjust to the dark almost immediately, well enough to see you tangled up in blankets with your head buried in a pillow. Your breathing rate is deep enough to suggest that you are asleep.

“Detective,” Connor begins, shaking your shoulder. You mumble something undecipherable before burrowing deeper into your comforter. “Detective,” he says, even more firmly, “It is currently 7:03 AM. You need to get up.”

Your heart rate spikes upon hearing a strange voice and you jolt up, inhaling sharply. “What?” Your eyes latch onto the silhouetted form in front of you, made hazy and all the more threatening by your sleep-addled mind. Someone is about to kill you. Your mind urges you to act, and you lunge for the nightstand drawer at the other end of your bed, the drawer with the gun in it. Your thumb catches on the safety as you aim it up at the intruder. With the rush of adrenaline having had ample time to wake you the fuck up, you realize you're staring at a vaguely familiar face. A dark haired android with an LED spinning yellow at his temple.

Last time you checked, no android had ever been caught breaking and entering. Though, before last night, no android had been caught murdering anyone either.

“Hello, detective. It's me, Connor,” he has his palms raised to calm you, to show you that he means no harm.

“What the fuck are you doing in my room?” you demand to know, letting out a massive breath. With shaky fingers, you put the safety back on and set the gun down on your blanket.

“I have calculated that waking up at 7:00 AM would give you enough time to—”

“My alarm is set for 7:05!” you groan. Now you're losing out on two extra minutes. Damn it.

“I'm sorry, Detective.”

You drag an exhausted hand down your face, “I thought I told you to knock first.” It is too early for this shit.
“I *did* knock,” Connor tilts his head, almost appearing hurt that you’d think he forgot to do so. “You didn't answer, so I decided to come in. Should I not have done that?”

“Generally when you knock on someone's door, you're supposed to wait for permission to come in first,” you sigh. At least you'd had the common sense to sleep in a t-shirt last night. “The only exceptions are when you've got a search warrant or you have probable cause that someone’s in danger.”

His LED pulses blue. “I'll remember that for the future, detective.”

“Thanks.” You look at your warm bed regretfully, knowing what you must do. “I guess I'm already awake. Might as well get a head start on the day, or some bullshit like that.” You roll out of bed, shivering at the sudden cool air that washes over you. “I'm going to change now.”

“Okay,” Connor nods, still standing in your bedroom while you are only half clothed. Your lips quirk. His robot brain probably wouldn't even be capable of registering this as an inappropriate situation if you don't point it out.

“Are you going to leave?”

His brow furrows. “Do I need to?”

“Connor, I am about to be very naked, and I would like to be alone for that.”

His mouth opens, his LED flickers yellow, then he closes it again. “Oh.” Then he swivels on his heel and exits the room as quickly as possible while still remaining polite. Your door shuts with an obvious click.

Shaking your head to yourself, you strip and step into the bathroom, locking both doors in order to prevent another mishap. You move Connor's borrowed clothes into a hamper and turn the water on. It feels good to let your muscles decompress with the heat. Briefly, you look down, fingers lingering over the pair of bottles at the edge of tub. There are few things you're willing to splurge on, but good quality bath supplies is one of them. With the ease of following a routine spent years in the making, you scrub in a peach scented shampoo and conditioner. Then, you snatch up your usual bar of body soap, the one that smells faintly of summer flowers, and lather it into your skin.

Once you feel human again, you towel off and get out of the shower, grateful for the instant hair dryer at your disposal. Looking at your face in the mirror, you smile a little. You always love how refreshed you feel right after a hot shower, like you're cleansed of all the unpleasantness in the outside world.

With a sharp nod to your reflection, you go to the closet and browse through your paltry wardrobe. You get dressed quickly, mechanically: a black bra, a pair of underwear with holes in it, a pair of jeans without holes in it, a red blouse, sturdy sneakers, and an oversized brown jacket. Then there's your belt of course, with your holstered gun, flashlight, and badge. All that's left is a good teeth-brushing and a touch of lip balm, and you're good to go for the day.

In the living room, Connor stands as stiff as a board. His eyes move wildly back and forth beneath his lids. The LED at his temple flashes blue. “Connor? Are you okay?” You approach him hesitantly. There's no telling what could happen to you if CyberLife's latest model breaks while he's in your care. The thought of going up against that big of a company in a legal battle makes you shudder.
His eyes fly open and snap to yours. “I am in perfect working condition, Detective. I was simply making a report to Amanda.”

You look at the digital clock on the counter. It reads 7:34. You've still got time if you're fast enough.

Grabbing your purse and wordlessly indicating that Connor follow you out the door, you ask, “Who's Amanda? Is she from CyberLife?”

His mouth twitches up. “Amanda is more of a what than a who. She is a program designed to delegate CyberLife's wishes to me directly, and she also reports my findings back to the company.”

Cracking a smile, you aim for a friendly jab at him. “So you're saying you've got a little voice in your head that tells you what to do?”

“Amanda is not just an audio-based program. There is actually an entire simulation manufactured around her, built to look like a Zen garden.”

Now you're laughing to yourself. Guess androids aren't too knowledgeable in the sarcasm department.

Or maybe that was just really bad sarcasm.

His brow furrows. “I'm sorry, Detective. Did I say something amusing? That wasn't my intention.”

“No,” you shake your head. “It’s just—never mind. It's not really that funny.” At his look of confusion, you elaborate. “It's just that if you were a human, I'd be really concerned that you take orders from a garden lady living in your brain.”

Connor says nothing to that. He just frowns in thought, keeping stride with you as you leave the confines of the complex and strike out into the city. “Where are we going, Detective? We cannot get to the DPD on time if we go on foot.”

You've arrived at the first crosswalk and wait impatiently for the stripes to turn green. “We're not going to the station on foot. We're just gonna walk four blocks over.”

It's obvious to you that he's running some quick calculations in his robot brain. He blinks suddenly. “You take the 7:45 bus each morning?”

“Yes,” you nod. “Runs like clockwork, and it drops off on fifth, which is—”

“Two streets away from the DPD,” Connor finishes.

“Exactly.”

You both walk in relative silence. You're quiet because you're intent on getting to your destination in a timely fashion and conversation isn't going to get you there any faster. Connor is quiet because there's so much around to be scanning: people, signs, fingerprints, litter, voices, and that's just touching the surface.

“Oh, you've gotta be fucking kidding me,” you grab the crook of Connor's elbow to get his attention, pointing toward your bus stop. A group of anti-android protestors shouting through megaphones have gathered on the street corner. They haven't resorted to throwing bits of brick and bottles at passing androids like some other protestors you've seen. And, if they're not being violent, you don't really have the ability to infringe on their constitutional right to protest.
Your teeth clench as you realize you'll have to pass them.

They haven't spotted you yet though. You can use that to your advantage. “Connor, put this on. Cover all the android shit up.” You shrug out of your bulky jacket and pass it to him. He looks at you, confused.

“Detective, it is illegal for an android to hide their identifying markers.” He attempts to give the jacket back to you.

You refuse to take it, and your jaw sets defiantly. “Yeah, well I'm a police officer, I am the law, and I say that you wearing this will make both of us safer.”

“How so?” Connor asks, reluctantly putting his arms through the sleeves. His LED flashes yellow.

You step forward, zipping up the coat and pulling the hood over his head to cover the spinning yellow circle. You ignore the dark eyes piercing into yours. “Because I'm not gonna be able to stop coming to this bus stop, and I don't want them to get it into their heads to wait around for the cop android every morning.”

He pauses, tilting his head. His eyelashes flutter shut as he runs through potential future scenarios. “I hope this works, Detective.”

“Yeah, me too,” you mutter, looking away from the android securely bundled up in your favorite jacket. That’s kind of adorable, you catch yourself thinking.

You immediately stop thinking that.

“Come on,” you blurt out, “I think I can see the bus from here.”

“Detective, your heart rate has increased in frequency by 32%. Are you feeling alright?”

“I'll be fine once we're on the bus,” you shrug as nonchalantly as you’re able.

Connor nods, and the two of you approach the protestors. It's awkward. They take up the whole sidewalk, and you try to edge around them. “You think you're safe?” One of them shouts at you. His breath reeks of whiskey. “They're coming for your job next! And yours!” This last is directed at Connor.

You don't reply. You just walk faster, pulling Connor in tow before he can correct them. The bus turns into the street just in time and you prepare to board it. A relieved sigh escapes you too late, however, because when you look back you realize Connor is walking toward the boarding section for androids.

You forgot they even had an android section.

“Shit,” you hiss, lunging toward him. One of the protestors gets there first, however, yanking his hood back and revealing his LED.

The protestor’s eyes widen, and he turns toward you with bared teeth. “You with the blue-bloods, girlie? Or maybe you're even one of 'em! A new model like this one, without something to tag you so people don't know the truth!” There's genuine fear in his eyes. Fear and... something else.

“I'm not an android,” you grit out.

His eyes narrow. “Only one way to find out. Which way do you bleed?” As he speaks, he pulls out a
Just then, the bus pulls up. You flash your badge at the man. And, with an icy glare, you say, “As an officer of the DPD, I am ordering you to stand down immediately, sir.”

His eyes widen, he steps back, and the switchblade vanishes within the folds of his jacket. Then he shrugs. “So the DPD is walkin’ around with androids now. Maybe you'll be joining us soon.”

“Come on,” you say to Connor, whose flickering LED alternates between yellow and red, “we're gonna be late.” Reaching up, you pull his hood back into place. Then you take his hand and pull him up the steps, leading him to a pair of unoccupied seats. As the bus pulls away, the eyes of the protestors follow it. You quickly send in a request for a patrol to be put on the street, to disperse them if they get too rowdy. You note that one of the men pulled a knife on an officer.

“That man, Eric Plummer, has already been arrested twice,” Connor notes. “Once for domestic abuse, and once for tax fraud.” You raise your eyebrow at him, wondering what he’s getting at. “He was going to stab you,” the android lowers his voice so your choice of conversation doesn't attract the attention of the other passengers. His LED has returned to an icy blue.

“Yeah, well that's city life for you,” you joke.

“You should not have intervened once it put became clear you were at risk. I am not alive. CyberLife would just send a new Connor to take my place if I were to be destroyed. In all of the human race, there is only one of you, Detective. You are much more valuable.”

He’s not complimenting you. He is not complimenting you. That was not a compliment. It was a logistical computation.

You clear your throat. “It's cool and a little bit creepy that a mega corporation has that much money to spend on keeping you immortal, but there's no way in hell I'd just stand there and watch if those pricks decided to beat you up,” you grumble. “I don't give a fuck if you're not technically alive, if anything bad had happened to you it would've been on me. On my conscience.”

There's a pause where you're pretty sure he's looking up the word conscience. Then, “You would have felt...guilty?”

“Yeah,” you decide. “I'd have felt guilty.”

There it is. 1301 3rd Avenue. The Detroit Police Station.

You have the wherewithal to take your jacket back from Connor before you walk into the station. Everyone that knows you would've recognized it on him instantly, and that would have raised far more questions than you were prepared to answer. His hair is a little mussed from the hood flattening it to his head. Without thinking, you reach up and smooth it out. Your nails scratch lightly against his scalp.

He freezes, LED going yellow for an instant, and you realize what you've just done. “Oh. Jesus Christ. That's... weird. I'm sorry. Um. Yep,” you backpedal.

You walk quickly, very quickly. The dark-haired android at the reception desk buzzes you through without comment, and you nod politely to the officer by the gate. Strand, you think his name is.
Connor doesn't follow immediately behind you. Actually, you think he’s been stopped at reception. Good. That buys you some time to sit down at your desk and boot up your computer. You've been pretending to read one of the reports on the Ortiz case for approximately thirty seconds before he makes his way into the bullpen. He looks around at all the desks before he finds the one he wants. Anderson's. He looks across the room and finds Miller at his desk. “Do you know when Lieutenant Anderson will arrive?”

“Depends on where he was the night before,” Miller shrugs. “We'll be lucky if we see him by noon.”

“Thanks,” Connor offers him a small smile before sitting down in a chair on the other side of Anderson's desk. He sits there for all of twenty seconds before he’s back up again. When he looks up at your desk, you hurriedly flick your attention back to the monitor in front of you, although you certainly aren't reading any of the words on the screen.

When you look back at him, he's behind Anderson's desk, looking at his pictures and otherwise being a bit of a creep. You suppose that being a bot built specifically for detective work means he isn't able to turn the detecting part off, but you're worried about how this might come across to other observers. After a discreet once-over around the bullpen, you realize that no one's paying him any mind.

Everyone's so used to seeing androids now, you suppose, that even a new prototype like Connor wouldn't draw attention unless everyone knew what he was.

You wonder if he looked through all of your things while he was staying at your house last night. You quell the thought almost immediately. There's nothing much in your apartment that you'd like to keep to yourself, nothing much that even marks the space as yours. Well, there is the one thing, your dearest possession. But it's in your room, under your bed in a familiar black case. You probably won't be pulling it out again until Connor is out of your apartment.

A familiar face trudges into the bullpen, one you definitely weren't expecting to see for four or five hours. Connor has apparently seen Anderson before you, because he's already out from behind his desk. “It's good to see you again, Lieutenant Anderson,” Connor smiles brightly.


You almost wince. The two of them couldn't be more mismatched. Connor is clean-cut and overly cheerful while Anderson is unkempt and grouchy every day of the week.

“Hank! In my office!” Fowler’s voice carries throughout the space. You look up at him, startled, but he withdraws into his glass-walled office without saying anything more.

Anderson mutters a bunch of curse words under his breath, but he follows Fowler anyway. For a minute there, you think that Connor will follow him, but he decides against it. Instead, his eyes land on the coffee machine in the break room.

A little smile forms on your lips as you piece together his reasoning. Coffee is as good of a peace offering as anything else.

Your eyes stay latched onto Connor's back, tracing repeatedly over the word ANDROID in white print. That's probably why you don't notice Reed until he's up in Connor's face. Although you're pretty good at lipreading, you don't need to be in order to make out the sheer hostility in Reed’s words.

You have no doubts about what's going on. Connor is being his woefully naïve self and Reed is
trying to have a dick measuring contest with the guy he perceives as a threat to his position.

“Bring me a coffee, dipshit,” Reed says to Connor, looking like the world's cockiest son of a bitch. “Get a move on!”

Connor stiffens enough for you to notice. Maybe he's not as woefully naïve as you thought. He tilts his head to the side, and this time you're pretty sure his look of mild confusion is a fake one, one designed to infuriate. “I'm sorry, but I only take orders from Lieutenant Anderson.”

Reed relaxes, looking back toward a woman sitting at the table. But you know him better than that. You're out of your seat an instant before he throws a punch that connects squarely with Connor's stomach. The android falls to one knee, curled inward. Reed leans down, whispers something in his ear, and jabs a finger at his temple. Then, laughing, he leaves the break room with the other woman. When he meets your eyes, he only winks flirtatiously.

Fuck that fucking bitch fuck him to hell he can go suck on my motherfucking dick see how he—stop it. Look at Connor.

Offering your hand to him, you force your voice to become soft, to not betray the anger you feel toward Reed, “Are you okay?”

He looks up sharply, surprised. His LED turns from yellow to blue, and he takes your hand. You help him up. “I'm okay, Detective. It would take more than that to damage me.”

“Right,” you purse your lips, turning around to put a cup under the coffee machine. “Reed is an asshat. He’s like a schoolyard bully, but instead of stealing your lunch money, he just insults you constantly and, apparently, physically assaults you on special occasions.” Your nose wrinkles. “It's weird, you know? Usually he’s all bark and no bite. If he’s using someone as a human punching bag, they're normally not people he could get fired for hitting.”

“I'm not a human, Detective. I'm a machine.”

“That’s not the point,” you snap. Then a thought strikes you, and you deflate a little as you watch the paper cup in front of you fill up with dark coffee. “No. You’re right. That is the point. To him you’re just a machine. It’s okay to hit you because he knows you won’t hit back.”

Connor sounds skeptical when he replies, “Are you suggesting that I engage in violence when confronted with Detective Reed? I am not permitted to escalate tense situations with officers of the DPD.”

Your shoulders sag a little as you pour a decent amount of creamer and add a dash of sugar to the coffee. It's not too sweet, but it helps with the flavor of the watered down bean juice. “Here,” you pass the cup over to the android. Connor takes it reflexively. He opens his mouth to ask a question, but you beat him to the punch. “It's for Lieutenant Anderson.”

“I see,” his expression smooths out. “This is how he likes his coffee prepared?”

“I have no idea,” you grin toothily. “This is more of an educated guess. The amount of alcohol and fast food that guy consumes, I doubt he cares that much about what he puts in his body.”

He frowns slightly, “I see. Detective, I—”

“Hey!” Anderson’s shout snags the attention of everyone in the bullpen, but with a quick look you figure out that he's definitely talking to you. “Fowler needs to talk to you two idiots and me. Get up here.”
“O-okay,” you stutter, feeling a cold wash of fear travel down your spine. You haven't been called into Fowler's office in a while, and the last time was not exactly pleasant. Now you wonder if all this work you'd put into trying to stay on his good side was for nothing.

The eyes of Reed, Miller, and a few others drill into your back as you make your way to Fowler's office. Carefully, you eke the glass doors open and slip inside. Connor follows close behind.

Fowler sits at his desk, scowling at his computer. On it, you can see a window open, one that shows the silhouetted form of a familiar android: Damian. *Connor must've sent the file to Fowler. You can't be angry. It's what you wanted to happen.* You glance over at Anderson, but he just raises his eyebrows questioningly at you.

“So, *Detective,*” Fowler says without looking up from his screen. “You want to explain this to me?

You gulp. “It's a video of the android's confession.”

Fowler looks unamused. “I had two or three guys interrogating that thing for at least an hour last night, and it didn't say a single goddamn word the whole time. Then RoboCop over here sends me this, a full confession wrapped up in a clean little five minutes, and I'm left thinking one thing.” He sighs, leaning back in his chair. Clearly, he enjoys keeping you in suspense.

“This officer is a waste, sitting in a patrol car or filling out paperwork all day. She might have a knack for dealing with the plastic assholes. So, I'm putting you on this case. Here, these go to Cruiser Thirteen. I know you don't have a car.”

You inhale sharply. Rogue tears prick at the corners of your eyes as you take the keys from him. This wasn't what you were expecting to hear today. “Thank you, sir. You won't regret this, sir.”

Anderson stands, like he's going to leave. “So I'm back on homicide? Fuckin' great.”

“Not so fast, Hank. You're partnered with the android. The detective here is just another officer assigned to the same case.”

Anderson whirs on Fowler, face contorted with anger, “What the fuck, Fowler? You're gonna saddle me up with a fuckin’ plastic prick and call it a day? That's some goddamn bullshit and you know it.”

You flinch at his words. Connor is standing in the same room. Anderson could at least wait to voice his concerns out of his hearing range.

*But,* you reason, *then that wouldn't really be Anderson.*

“Listen, Hank, CyberLife sent the bot here specifically to hunt down androids. I'm doing a favor for both of you.” He looks at you, “She hasn't had a high-profile case in at least a year, and you, Hank, you're in a rut. You've been stagnating, bored, pissed, I've only kept you on this long because—”

“I don't need any of your fucking favors, asshole,” Anderson growls.

Fowler’s eyes glint menacingly. “The two of you, plus the android, are working together on the deviant case. That's final. Now get out of my office.”

“Now you fuckin’ wait just a minute—”

“Get out, Hank. Final warning.”
He looks extremely tempted to say something bitchy, anything, but he settles for angry muttering as he storms out. You smile faintly at Connor. He's still holding his peaceful coffee offering. “Let's go,” you say, holding the door open for him. His LED flashes blue as he exits the office, trailing after a very grumpy Lieutenant Anderson.

You go reluctantly to your own desk, finding a couple hundred new files awaiting you. *Fuck. This deviant shit has been going on this long?* You scroll all the way to the bottom. The most recent case is usually a good place to find a lead in a case like this.

You quickly scan the report. An AX400, some domestic house bot like a maid or a nanny or something, escaped from its owner last night. There are signs that a child lived there, but the child is now missing along with the AX400. *Huh.* You type in the address of the owner's home, and an interactive mapping program shows you what it looked like a few months ago. It's old and run down, just like the rest of the houses around it.

A heavy thud distracts you from your reading. Anderson has Connor by the throat, pinned up against the wall. He looks like he's murmuring threats against the android, but Connor just stares back at him calmly. An officer approaches them, clearly apologetic for interrupting a tense moment.

Whatever the officer says, Anderson's hand loosens from around Connor's neck and the android’s feet return to the ground. He looks none the worse for wear. That's a relief.

You return to your work, looking up a few baseline legal records on the Todd Williams listed in the report. His wife filed for divorce a few years ago and he is currently unemployed.

A shadow falls across your desk. “Hey,” Anderson scowls down at you. “There's an android, an AX-whatever that—”

“Ran away from its owner and took the kid with it. Yeah, I know. What about it?” Your gaze flicks from him to Connor, who hovers over his shoulder.

Anderson's scowl deepens. “Great. Now I gotta deal with two smartasses.” He crosses his arms. “Anyway, the thing was spotted out in Ravendale and this asshole won't leave me alone about it. I'm humoring it.”

He turns to leave and Connor follows after him. “Wait,” you scramble to shut down your computer, “I'm coming with you. Just give me a minute to find my new car. I'll follow you guys there.”

“Whatever,” Anderson shrugs without looking back at you. “Just get a move on.”

“Yes, sir,” you grin, jogging out of the station and over to the car lot. You press a button on the key fob and a police cruiser, no different from the others in the lineup, chirps in response. Cruiser Thirteen. You unlock the doors and slide into the driver's seat. When you curl your fingers around the steering wheel, you realize that for the first time in a long time, you're free. With this car, you're no longer confined to bus routes and places within walking distance.

You can go anywhere.

For now, though, *anywhere* just means directly behind Anderson's vintage vehicle, weaving through the Detroit streets on a mission to hunt down a deviant.

Connor walks up the wooden staircase, gun drawn, peering upward once he reaches the first landing.
“Is there anyone upstairs?” He asks the badly deteriorated android kneeling on the floor.

“No. There’s no one.”

*Stress level down 20%. Now at 42%.*

*The deviant is telling the truth.*

Connor lowers the gun and resumes scanning the first floor.

*Fresh ashes in the fireplace. A human was here recently. Perhaps the child accompanying the AX400?*

*Disturbance of the dust on the floor. Something was dragged.*

*Scanning…*

*The angle and speed by which the object was dragged suggests it was pushed to the side of the staircase.*

*Probability of AX400 being under the staircase is 81%.*

Connor takes a couple of cautious steps toward the staircase once again. He notices a sharp jump in the stress level of the deviant on the floor.

*Stress level up 31%. Now at 73%.*

Another step.

*Stress level up 18%. Now at 91%.*

When Connor focuses his optical sensors, he can detect a human-like shape curled up behind the boxes.

*The deviant AX400 is under the staircase.*

“Lieuten—uf,” a heavy force knocks Connor off balance. He tumbles to the ground and his head connects with something so hard it momentarily jars his optical sensors.

“Run, quick Kara!” it cries.

Suddenly, the AX400 bursts out of hiding, dragging a human child behind her. They make a break for the back way.

*Mission Objective: pursue the deviant.*

Just as Connor is rolling to his feet, Lieutenant Anderson throws open the door, likely having heard the sounds of struggle. “Conn—the hell is going on?”

“It's here, Lieutenant! Call it in!” Connor shouts, already sprinting after the AX400.

“Connor! Wait a minute!” The Lieutenant protests.

Connor ignores him. He’s quickly out into the side alley behind the house. The deviant slips through a hole in the chainlink fence farther down, and he follows as quickly as he's able.

“Which way did it go?” he demands of the officer standing stunned on the other side.
“That way,” the man points, “They're headed for the train station.”

Connor’s feet slap hard against the wet pavement as he forces his thium pump regulator to move faster. He needs to go faster. Down the street, he skirts around clusters of frightened civilians. A police car with blaring sirens pulls up and an officer jumps out. “They went that way,” he jabs a finger down yet another alley.

Connor nods, continuing his pursuit. His footfalls raise splashes of wet muck, but he doesn’t care. He cares about nothing but the mission, and the mission has just finished scaling a fence barring off the sidestreet from the highway. Reaching the fence, he stops, hands gripping the metal.

The deviant is female, dressed in a dark coat. Its hair has been cropped short, and it's colored it black. Its LED is no longer attached to its temple. Its eyes are wide, confused, and artificially afraid. The child is afraid too. Not of the deviant, she clings to it for protection, but of him.

The officer from earlier has apparently followed him down the alleyway. He realizes this only when the officer raises his gun. “Don't shoot!” Connor puts his hand out to stop the man. “We need it alive.”

The deviant takes its chance, sliding down a muddy bank and scrambling over the highway guardrail. It's blatantly ignoring the holographic warning about the dangerously high speeds the cars travel at.

He hears two more sets of footsteps racing toward him. One is you. The other is the Lieutenant, whose breathing is much more labored. “Oh fuck. Jesus, that's—that's insane,” he exclaims once he sees that the deviant is in the process of helping the child safely across the highway.

**WARNING: FAILURE TO PURSUE WILL RESULT IN A FAILURE OF THIS MISSION. AMANDA WILL BE DISAPPOINTED.**

That can't be allowed to happen. Pursue the deviant.

Connor fits his shoe into one of the gaps in the fence, lifting himself up. Suddenly, there's a hand on his shoulder, pulling him back down. Lieutenant Anderson. “Hey! Where're you goin’?”

“I can't let them get away,” Connor says, watching as the deviant clambers over the rail at the midway point on the highway.

“They won't,” the lieutenant insists. “They'll never make it to the other side!”

Pursue the deviant.

Connor grits his teeth. He can make it. He has to. Again, he uses his feet to propel himself up the side of the fence. The lieutenant forces him back to the ground, this time with more force. “Hey, you’ll get yourself killed.”

Scanning…

*Expression: Worry.*

Lieutenant Anderson is worried about him?

“Do not go after it, Connor. That's an order!” Lieutenant Anderson raises his voice, as if becoming louder will somehow be more likely to get through to the android.
Another hand touches his arm. “Let her go, Connor. If you catch up to her on the highway, I doubt she'll still be alive by the end of it.”

**CONFLICTING ORDERS. CHOOSE PRIORITY.**

*Choosing priority…*

Between the weight of your stare and the hint of concern wrinkled into the lieutenant’s brow, Connor makes his choice. He slackens; his hands drop limply to his sides.

*Software instability increased.*

---

You drive back to the station to type up a report on the AX400 case. Anderson doesn't totally dislike you, and you're already on good terms with Connor. At least, you'd like to think so. *What they need,* you smile to yourself, *is some quality partner bonding time.*

Connor, meanwhile, sits quietly in the passenger seat of Lieutenant Anderson's car. The man has the radio cranked up to the maximum volume, singing along where he knows the words and mumbling the rest.

Connor’s eyelids slide shut almost automatically. He begins running the song through the same algorithms he'd constructed for your music. He puts *“Bullet in the Head”* by Rage Against the Machine, Alternative Metal, 1991, into a completely separate file. He labels it: *Lieutenant Anderson's Music Profile.*

Eventually, the car rolls to a stop at the side of the road. Rain patters onto the glass of the windshield, but the lieutenant takes no notice. He turns to Connor and says in a low voice, “Stay in the car. Got it?” Without waiting for an answer, the man exits the vehicle and crosses the road, almost getting run over in the process. He approaches a food truck emblazoned with ‘Chicken Feed’ in neon fluorescents.

*Mission Objective updated: reconcile with Lieutenant Anderson.*

Connor pops the lock on the car door and gets out, hearing the fry cook in the truck make a derogatory comment about Lieutenant Anderson having a new piece of plastic around. With determined focus, the RK800 crosses the street.

A dark skinned man by the name of Pedro appears to be informing the lieutenant about odds for an upcoming horse race. He makes no effort to hide the illegal nature of his proposal. To Connor's surprise, the lieutenant gives him a few bills to place a bet. He saunters away afterward, and Connor steps into place beside the lieutenant.

As soon as Lieutenant Anderson registers that Connor has followed him there, his expression darkens. “What is your problem? Don't you ever do as you're told?” Connor doesn't answer him. He just watches. This aggravates the lieutenant even more. “Look, you don't have to follow me around everywhere like a—like a poodle!” Scowling, he fixes his gaze on the man preparing his meal.

Connor blinks as he considers what to say. Finally, he settles on an apology. “I'm sorry for my behavior back at the police station. I didn't mean to be unpleasant,” he says in earnest.

“Oh wow,” the lieutenant shakes his head. “You've even got a brown-nosing apology program. Guys at CyberLife thought of everything, huh?”
Searching for results on 'brown-nosing'...

Results found.

*Brown-nose, verb, informal, to curry favor with someone by acting in an obsequious way, to 'suck up' to someone.*

Connor opens his mouth to object, to tell him that he was, in fact, entirely serious about his apology, but then he realizes that the lieutenant is chuckling. Connor smiles back despite nothing within his programming telling him that he needs to.

The cook passes Lieutenant Anderson a burger and soda, more calories than can be healthy for him. “Ah, thanks Gary. I'm starving.”

“Don't leave that thing here,” Gary warns.

“Huh,” the lieutenant snorts. “Not a chance. Follows me everywhere.”

Connor's lips again find themselves tugging upward at his certainty. The RK unit certainly wasn't going to prove him wrong. In a matter of seconds, Connor finds himself standing across from the lieutenant at a metallic table. There's an umbrella attached to it, so the rain doesn't interfere with unfortunate customers.

Without hesitation, Lieutenant Anderson opens the colorful box, withdraws the burger, and takes a massive bite out of it. Conversation is usually acceptable during eating breaks, so Connor begins to converse.

“This Pedro?” the android leans forward slightly to invite confidence. “He was proposing...illegal gambling. Am I right?” Perhaps the lieutenant had not picked up on the man's earlier implications.

He chews a few times, swallows, and smiles. “Yeah.”

“And you made a bet.” This is more of a statement than a question.

“Yeah,” he says again, almost appearing confused that Connor might find the activity questionable.

The android tilts his head, processing. His optical sensors scan the man's food again, even though he remembered its contents perfectly. “Your meal contains 1.4 times the recommended daily intake of calories and twice the cholesterol level.” He raises his eyebrows to emphasize the importance of those statistics. “You shouldn't eat that.”

The lieutenant shrugs. “Everybody's gotta die of somethin’.” If Connor looks closely enough, at the crinkle around his eyes, he thinks he can sense *Microexpression: Amusement.* Perhaps his emotional identification program is malfunctioning.

Maybe Connor should switch the topic away from criticizing the lieutenant, at least for the time being. “Well, is there anything you'd like to know about me?”

“Hell no,” he sneers before Connor's even finished speaking. Then he reconsiders. “Wait. No. Yeah. Um... why do they make you look so goofy and give you that weird voice?”

This is a question that Connor can answer with little effort. “CyberLife androids are designed to work harmoniously with humans. Both my appearance and voice are specifically designed to facilitate my integration.”
The lieutenant nods gravely. “Well, they fucked up.”

Did they? Has his integration been poorly facilitated? Connor doesn't think so, but maybe he isn't the best candidate to judge. No. There's an implication of a smirk. Lieutenant Anderson is making a joke.

Connor looks down, processors whirring in his head. He tells the lieutenant everything CyberLife has given him access to about the nature of deviants. The older man listens without cutting him off, which is more than Connor expected.

It's only when the lieutenant brushes a hand through a clump of grey hair that Connor remembers the small incident that had occurred this morning outside of the police station. “Lieutenant?”

“Yeah?” he sighs.

“This morning at approximately 8:17 AM, the detective touched my hair. It felt...strange. Like my system momentarily shorted out. Is that normal?”

He gapes at Connor. “She did what now?”

“She touched my hair,” Connor helpfully explains. “I had been wearing her jacket, and when I gave it back to her, I believe that my hair was disheveled. She was helping to smooth it out, but I felt strange. It's possible she felt the same way, as her heart rate increased and she left almost immediately.”

“Oh my fuckin’ God,” Lieutenant Anderson groans, setting his burger down. “You can't be serious.”

Connor subtly cocks his head to the side. “It was not my intent to tell a joke.”

All he does is glare down at his meal. “The two of you spent one night together. One, and this is what fuckin’ happens.”

“What? Do you know what's wrong with me?”

“Wrong? Nothing's wrong. It's just—you know what? It's not any of my business if you two get up to any hanky-panky. Just don't tell me about it. Ever. Got it?”

“No really. I still don't understand.”

He looks unbelievably pained at that. “Jesus.”

“Are you alright, Lieutenant?”

“I'm—I don't fuckin’ know. I was never any good at this shit, and you're a fuckin’ android. Just, uh. I'm gonna talk to her once we get back to the station. I'll try to figure some of this shit out.”

“Oh.” Connor hadn't expected him to offer assistance for what he assumed was a relatively small issue. “Thank you, Lieutenant.”

“I already regret everything about this.”

“If it will cause you that much trouble, Lieutenant, you don't need to do anything. It has no real bearing on the mission, although it would be helpful to know whether or not I am malfunctioning. I'll run a systems diagnostic check on myself when we leave.”

“You're not malfunctioning, Connor. You're just really fuckin’ clueless.”
Idk this is the most fun I've had writing in a while, so I hope you all continue to enjoy it!
feelings are Definitely Not happening

Chapter Notes

Honestly, this fic is such a blast to write, even if it's a little hard sometimes.

Some archive shenanigans happened where, long story short, a large part of this chapter was deleted and I hadn't had it saved anywhere else so I just rewrote a lot of it.

See the end of the chapter for more notes

While we kept on the deviant's trail to the best of our ability, the AX400 crossed the highway with Alice Williams. Lieutenant Anderson and myself decided that a continued pursuit would be too dangerous, so we ordered Connor, the RK800 unit, to stand down. To my knowledge, the deviant and child completed the crossing safely, without incident, and boarded a southbound train. Their final destination is unknown.

Your fingers hover over the keyboard, wondering if there's anything you've forgotten to mention in the report. It's only a page and a half. It makes you feel like you're doing the case a disservice. Still, you've filled out everything to the best of your knowledge. You sigh, submit what you have, and lean back in your chair.

A familiar pair of arms fold themselves above your head. A new weight sinks against your chair. You look up into a pair of warmly twinkling eyes. "Hey, Chris. Long time no see."

He chuckles, moving to perch himself on the edge of your desk. "So, you've finally got yourself another case, huh? It's about damn time."

"I know," you nod. A small burst of pride bubbles through your chest. "I'm really excited about it. I have a car now, so you don't need to worry about shipping my sorry ass across the city."

He snorts. "What are you talking about? You never asked to go anywhere. The only times you'd let me drive you places were when we were on patrol or headed to a bar."

"Still," a sunny smile breaks across your face, "I have a car, Chris! I have actual autonomy for the first time in forever."

"Yeah," he sniffs, pretending to wipe away a tear from his cheek. "My little girl is growing up so fast."

You grin at him. "Shut up."

He kicks lightly at the base of your chair, becoming a little more serious. "What are your thoughts on the bigger news? We aren't partners anymore."

"Uh, yeah," your face falls. You hadn't really thought much about Miller in the chaos of the past two days. Mentally banging your head against a wall, you curse yourself for being a shitty friend. "Are you gonna be okay? Have you been assigned a new partner yet?"

"Mm hm," he nods, grimacing. "Jacob Hadley. He sits three desks down from you. He's been here for six years. I think this might actually be his first promotion."
Your gaze drifts over to the aforementioned desk. Hadley's is a face that only carries the passing familiarity that comes from walking by him every day for the past couple of years. He's never come drinking with the other officers. There are no family pictures or identifiable knick knacks on his desk. His clothing is drab, composed entirely of neutral colors. The most exciting thing about him is the bright yellow mustard stain just below his collar. Right now, he sits with his eyes glued to his terminal, a half-eaten burger resting next to his keyboard.

“He seems nice,” you say. That's all you really can say without ever having had a conversation with the man.

Miller makes a noise that can only be described as disgruntled. “He's nice, sure, but I think I'll end up dying of sheer boredom by the end of the month.”

“Hey,” you try to cheer him up. “It could be worse. You could've been forced to work with Reed.”

He raises a skeptical brow. “Honestly? That might not have been as bad.”

“What?” You say, taken aback.

“The guy might be a prick, but at least he’s got a personality. Pretty smart, too.”

A spike of betrayal pierces through you. “You've got to be kidding me. The man doesn’t know how to shut up, and he's an ass to everyone. And he, well,” your voice lowers to a barely audible level, “you know what he did to me, Chris.”

He finally let's a grin crack through his façade. “Oh, relax. I’m just messing with you.”

“Good,” you roll your eyes, “I was freaking out.”

He folds his arms, looking at you with ill-disguised curiosity. “So yeah, I got Hadley. But you? You’re all buddy-buddy with Anderson and the android detective guy now, huh? How’s that been treating you?”

“This is only my first day, Miller,” you shrug. He's been around you long enough to notice the darting glance toward Anderson's desk.

“Okay? That doesn’t mean you haven’t formed an opinion yet. I know you well enough to recognize that much, at least.”

Sighing, you are forced to relent. “Fine. It’s been nice being out in the thick of things, out in the action again.”

“Murder-suicides weren’t enough action for you? Thanks for taking care of that report, by the way. Saved me one hell of a headache.”

“No,” you shake your head, frustrated at your own inability to effectively communicate. “It’s just that this... this is a case I was assigned to out of pure merit, I guess. I really think this is something big, you know? Something that goes deeper into this city than the average homicide case.”

Chris laughs at your no-nonsense phrasing. “What do you mean, average homicide case?”

You huff quietly. “Oh, come on. You know exactly what I’m talking about. There are only so many different ways you can see a dead person before things start to blur together. That’s not to say that I’m not interested in finding justice for victims or catching the bad guy or anything, but this is just... new.”

“An android?” Your eyes light up at the thought. “It's fascinating. He can scan evidence in real time, and he's pretty agile, too. He ended up chasing this one AX400 down a few city blocks a few hours ago. He would've caught her if she hadn't decided to cross the fucking highway. Lord, I'm glad she and the kid are alright.”

Chris furrows his brows, more intrigued than he was previously. “I was going to ask about Lieutenant Anderson. Figured the android wouldn't be anything to write home about. But, since you brought it up, what do you think the odds are of a bunch of them taking over the DPD completely? Are you worried about it?” Concern is clearly written across his features, in the clench of his jaw and the flaring of his nostrils. You remember that he has a wife and kids, and you think his need to provide for them is where a lot of his worry stems from.

You seriously consider his question. *Is Connor a threat to my job? His job?* Somehow, you don't think the android that's incapable of parsing sarcasm from literal speech would get very far without assistance. “I think, as of now, the most we'll see is an influx of android detectives acting as partners to human ones. Connor...he’s only a prototype. I think this is some sort of trial run that CyberLife has put him on, to see if he can perform adequately.”

“But in a year? Five? Ten? Will we even be...I don't know… necessary?”

Your expression becomes a solemn one. “I don't think anyone can answer that question just yet, Chris. But, personally speaking, there's still a lot that humans offer in this line of work that no android can match. Remember, they're still confined to their programming. We aren't. That's what makes us human, isn't it? Our freedom?”

The word sticks in your throat.

*Freedom.*

Clearly, it's possible for an android to make its own decisions, to deny the orders in its coding. If it weren't possible, there wouldn't be over two hundred case files under the subheading labeled *deviant.* What is humanity doing, treating beings that are, by all rights, completely sentient, like the dirt beneath their feet? It doesn't sit right with you. You had never really supported the way people treated androids, even before you knew about deviancy, but now it's in your face. Personal.

“Sure. You're probably right, as usual,” Chris laughs. It's a somewhat forced sound. “Whelp. I'd better get back to work. I'll see you around, right?”

“Yeah, man. Besides, you still owe me that date at Jimmy's,” you stick your tongue out at him in an attempt to bring some levity back to the conversation.

He laughs again, for real this time. “Date. Right. You wish.”

“Have fun at work without me, loser,” you call after him. He shakes his head at you. You like to think it's out of a fond kind of exasperation.

When you once again return your attention to your terminal, you see an alert blinking red at the bottom of the screen. You click on it, alarmed to see that a new report has come in. A deviant has been spotted recently in another part of the city, maybe a ten minute drive if you factor in traffic.

Figuring that Connor and Anderson would've already received the same report, you grab your keys and take off. *Jesus, you think to yourself, is hunting down deviants always gonna be this hectic?*
You shrug to yourself. Anything beats spending the day on your ass just filling out paperwork. With a series of quick, assured taps, you punch in the address that had been sent out. Then, you pull out of the parking lot and onto the street. There is always the option to let the automated controls of the car take over, but you prefer to drive yourself. It gives you something to do with your hands, something for your brain to latch onto so you won't have to think about things.

When you pull up to the specified building, you grimace. It's crumbling where it stands. The brick is coated in grime, and any exposed metal has been taken over by rust. The only cheerful thing about the place is the colorful street art adorning the walls: a wild mustang made of vivid mosaic-like pieces fitted together at the edges, electric blue skeletons dancing to music that can't be heard, and some video game character that's been skillfully rendered in black and crimson.

It should be at least a little depressing that the best thing about a building is a flashy brand of vandalism, but it isn't. Not really. You can understand the need to declare yourself to the world, and places like this only benefit from it. An old, unloved wall is just a free canvas to anyone with a can of spray paint and a little creativity.

You get out of your cruiser and approach the building. Anderson's car, you notice, is parked a little distance away, tucked off to the side in an unobtrusive alley. Sure enough, the door nearest to Anderson's car has a busted lock; it hangs crookedly in its frame.

They're already inside, you assume.

You ease the door open, wincing as it squeaks. With a swift look down the plain hallway, you see no indication of anything having been recently disturbed. The door that leads to the emergency stairwell, however, demarcated with a faded green sign. You slip inside and peer upward, suspicious. No one's shooting at you, so you take the concrete steps two at a time, checking each hall once you reach a new landing.

Finally, you reach a floor with familiar voices echoing down it, and you pad silently over to the threshold you think they're coming from.

Easing this door open, you're met with a long wood-paneled corridor. The darkness shrouds the corners of the room. It has probably gone untended to for far longer than it should have. At the end of the hall, you see yet another door. It is a faintly green, mildewy kind of white; the paint is peeling off like flakes of dried skin.

This door, too, looks like it's been forced open. You roll your eyes, turning the rusted silver knob and using your body weight to offset the stubbornness of its hinges. Typical.

What you find inside, however, is very much the opposite of typical. In fact, you would probably describe it as extraordinarily atypical.

The apartment… it's filled with pigeons.

There have to be over a hundred of them, easily. You can barely see the floorboards, that's how many of them there are. And the smell—good lord it's awful—like a decade old chicken coop that's never been cleaned. Connor, who had been in the process of ripping a poster off the wall, turns to look at you. When he registers who you are, he offers you a professional nod. “Hello, Detective.”

“Um. Hi, Connor.” You take a few tentative steps into the shadowy space. The pigeons at your feet flutter into the air to make room. You wonder if you've offended them somehow. It's stupid to be
thinking something like that, you realize. You have more important things to be worried about, like the suspected deviant that's supposed to be here but isn't. "What's the situation? Where's the android?"

The RK800 turns back to the poster, tearing it completely from the wall. There's a collection of items, most interestingly a leather-bound book, hidden away within the secretive hidey-hole. "It is no longer here. Lieutenant Anderson and I are looking for clues. If you find anything of note, I would be interested to know about it."

From what you can see of the pages that Connor flips through, everything is written in an unintelligible code. Whatever the writing is, you don't think it's as simple to understand as a Caesar or Playfair cipher. Circular maze-like sketches fill portions of the pages. Scrawled into the margins, you notice a familiar jumble of characters: rA9.

You doubt you have a better chance than Connor at deciphering the book’s contents, so you decide to leave him to it.

"Yeah, okay. I'll see what I can find." you smile at the android's back.

"Thank you, Detective," he mumbles in reply, still looking through the book’s pages.

Wading through the sea of shit and pigeons, you stumble toward a bathroom. What you find there doesn't disappoint you. Obsessive writing on the walls, rA9 scrawled over and over again in black against porcelain tile. With a cursory check of the bathtub, you're thankful that this deviant decided to skip on the whole religious idolatry thing.

"Hey, did you see something in—Jesus Christ," Anderson sputters from the entryway. His frame blocks out what little light there is in the already dark bathroom. "Connor, come 'ere," he calls, poking his head out into the main room.

You hear a faint, "Yes, Lieutenant?" Then Connor is in the bathroom with the two of you. It's a space that isn't built with three people in mind, but that doesn't stop him. Scanning, he takes in the wall of writing with a blue whirl of his LED.

"Do you have any idea what rA9 is?" You ask him, not at all thinking about how close he is to you, or how you could hold his hand without even having to try very hard.

"No," he shakes his head. You snap out of whatever childish daydream you'd been in the middle of. "It is the same thing that Carlos Ortiz’s android wrote on the shower walls. It appeared to have an almost religious connotation. rA9 may be code for an android, a program, an idea, a place, anything. At this point, we have no way of knowing for sure."


"Neither do we," you shoot back coolly. Anderson raises his eyebrows at you, looking like he wants to ask you something. He seems to think better of it once Connor starts talking again.

"It's taken out its LED. The suspect is a confirmed deviant," he holds a shiny white disk up for your inspection, expression grim. Replacing the LED on the edge of the sink, he crouches down next to a stool that's toppled over on its side in front of the rA9 wall. When he stands, it's just as sudden. He walks out of the bathroom without another word.

You and Anderson exchange skeptical looks, but you follow him anyway. The android detective now analyzes a metal birdcage. You laugh at the irony of it. There are birds in every place imaginable except for the birdcage. "The deviant fell in the bathroom," Connor murmurs, "in the
middle of writing, and it ran out here. It must have heard Lieutenant Anderson and I come in because it tripped again, hit the birdcage, and kept running. That means...” His attention drifts over to an uncomfortable looking loveseat. Then up, to a gaping hole in the ceiling.

“It's still here,” the three of you conclude at the same time.

As soon as the words escape you, a dark mass lunges from the ceiling, taking Connor down with a heavy thump. With the sudden disturbance, a few dozen pigeons take flight, making the scene a confusing mess of motion for you to parse out.

“God damn fuckin’ pigeons!” Anderson makes swatting motions at the newly airborne birds. “What are you waiting for?” he shouts at Connor. “Chase it!”

Without another word, the android takes off, chasing after the deviant. You look between Connor's retreating form and Anderson, conflicted.

“We're not gonna be able to keep up with ‘em,” he tells you gruffly. “Come on.”

At first, you run in the same direction as the pair of androids, but soon enough you take an abrupt turn. You keep them in your line of sight, taking a few shortcuts across multiple buildings. Tracking the androids across several rooftop greenhouses and other growing spaces, the pair of you end up leaping from roof to roof on a collision course with the deviant.

Adrenaline courses through your blood; you feel the thrill of the chase blooming in your chest. You're grinning without realizing it, and you've soon overtaken Anderson. The shock of seeing Connor leap onto a moving train only stalls you for a moment, although it's long enough to appreciate the predatory grace with which he moves. You hear a surprised, “Holy shit!” from behind you. Anderson must have just witnessed the same thing.

The deviant leaps from the train, hauling ass up a maintenance ladder. You know Connor will be able to keep up, but maybe you can do him one better.

“This way,” you point toward a metal crosswalk, trusting Anderson to follow you. You lengthen your stride and suck in gulps of air, drawing ahead of the deviant and Connor. This, if you're going to be perfectly honest, is only because they get caught up in weaving through a rooftop orchard, but you take it as a victory nonetheless.

Looking ahead, you see something that could either give you the edge, or put you way behind the android duo. There's a worker's entrance right in front of you, and to the side is about a foot wide of cement. You think it'll stay this way for a while, an and if you want even a chance to get the jump on the deviant, it's now or never.

“Keep going through the door!” you shout over your shoulder.

“What?”

You don't have time to explain any better than that. “The door! Trust me!”

With that, you veer off to one side, vaulting over a large air conditioning unit to land on the very edge of the roof. You continue running, keeping your eyes trained in front of you and not at the sidewalk far below. As long as you keep your balance, you'll be leagues ahead of them. Connor will be right behind the deviant, Anderson will be coming from this way, and you, with any luck, will be coming from the opposite direction.

In an absurdly short amount of time, you reach an open helipad area, possibly for offloading supplies
and the like. To your left is a carefully cultivated corn patch. At least that makes it easy to tell how very very close the deviant is to you.

The only problem? There's nowhere left for you to run.

The deviant breaks free of the corn stalks just as Anderson slams the door open next to you. “Hey,” he shouts, “stop right there!”

The deviant's attention swivels to Anderson. You can see the moment his body changes direction. In no time at all, he's grappling with the grizzled detective. It's made clear early on that he's no match for the android's strength. Before you can do much of anything, the deviant has pushed him over the edge of the building.

“Anderson!” You scream, sure you've just witnessed the death of him. But no, he clings on to the roof. Out of the corner of your eye you see Connor look between the two of you before running to the lieutenant's aid.

As the deviant's icy gaze locks with yours, you feel relief turn to pure fear, this time for yourself. “Stop, please,” you slip your gun smoothly from its holster. “I don't want to hurt you.”

The deviant smiles, though there is no joy in it. “Then what do you plan to do with that?”

You shrug, thankful that your racing heart can be chalked up to chasing down a suspect rather than your being afraid. “I'll put it down, if it'll make you feel better.”

“No,” the deviant’s eyes narrow. “Humans lie. Humans hurt our kind. I would be stupid to believe anything that comes out of your mouth.” He tilts his head slightly to the side. “So just shoot me, Detective.”

“That doesn't make sense. You want me to shoot—?”

“You'll turn me in,” he cuts you off. “They'll deactivate me. They'll kill me. I'd rather die on my terms, thank you.”

“Bud, I'm sure we can work something out. Just—”

“Will you let me go?”

That pulls you up short. “I...I don't know.” By now, Connor and Anderson are standing on either side of the deviant. “You did evade questioning, not to mention the fact that you assaulted both Connor and Lieutenant Anderson.” At his suspicious expression, you clarify. “That's all we were here to do, you know. Question you. Some neighbors heard some weird noises, thought you were a deviant. I mean...you are a deviant, but it's not like you'd murdered anyone.”

Right as you think you've gotten through to him, Connor stiffens, LED flashing bright blue. Oh no. “Model 874 004 961, serious malfunctions have been detected in your software, including class 4 errors. You have been deemed defective and will be sent back to CyberLife for deactivation.”

Anderson nods in agreement, fishing a pair of handcuffs out of his jacket. “’Mere,” he says, forcing the android's arms behind his back.


“Shut up,” Anderson snaps.
“You're just their slave,” the deviant spits out. His eyes flick pointedly from Connor's to your own.

“I said shut up,” Anderson smacks him roughly on the back of the head. He's clearly not happy with the android. You probably wouldn't be very pleased either, especially if said android had just pushed you off a roof.

With one hand clamped firmly around the deviant's bicep, Anderson shoves him forward. “Alright. Come on, now.”

You've walked a few steps before the deviant bows his head. You hear a muttered “rA9 save me.” It sounds like a prayer.

Then he whirls around, racing toward the edge of the building with the sole intent to jump off of it. You didn't chase this bastard down only to have him kill himself at the first chance. You sprint after him, using the very last ounce of stamina still stored in your cells in order to tackle the android to the ground. He writhes beneath you, bucking like a rodeo bronco, but you use the sharp joint of your knee to pin him down. "Anderson!"

“What the fuck?” the detective swears, rushing to help you.

"Keys!"

"What?"

"The keys to the cuffs. Get 'em off."

“You're crazy.”

“He might calm down a little, I don't know! I don't need him doing a swan dive off the roof, that's for sure, so just—"

"Fine. Don't get your panties in a twist," he grumbles, complying nonetheless. When the manacles snap free, the deviant breaks your hold on him, flipping you over with such unexpected force that you go down with nothing more than a pained thud. You feel the cold barrel of your own gun dig into your head. His other hand wraps around your throat. He doesn't apply enough force to crush your windpipe, but you're pretty sure he will leave marks on your skin.

The deviant looks up at Anderson and Connor, both of whom have their weapons aimed at him. “Back off!” He yells, finger tightening on the trigger just enough to send a message to them, but not enough to send a bullet through your skull. You find yourself immensely grateful for the precision of androids, because he knows exactly how far he can go before the gun fires. When the deviant is satisfied that they've backed far enough away, he turns his attention to you. "What are you playing at, human?"

"Nothing," you whisper, wondering if what you had perceived as a show of goodwill might in actuality be your undoing. “I want to tell you something.” His brow wrinkles; his dark eyes bore holes into you, most likely trying to tell whether or not you have malicious intent. He dips his head lower, so the brim of his hat almost touches your face. You incline your head so that Connor can't read your lips, as you suspect he might attempt to do. “Since you've already got me here, tell Connor that you'll kill me if he doesn't let you go.”

Surprise briefly shows itself in the parting of his lips and the dip of his brows. “How would that benefit you?” He waits for you to give him an answer, but you don't. You don't have anything to gain from this at all, except maybe your life. Still, there are ways you can get out of this without using yourself as a bargaining chip for the deviant's freedom. This is an option you're choosing.
“What if he decides your life isn't worth failing his mission for?” His mouth twists into a sneer. “What's stopping me from killing all three of you and leaving you here to rot?”

“Um,” you gulp. A quick glance over at Connor reveals him still aiming his gun at the deviant, unwavering. He doesn't even look at you. His LED flickers between blue and yellow. “If you kill me, they won't let you live. You won't manage to get both of them down before you're dead. My plan is the best way to ensure all of us leave here in one piece.”

The deviant's lips press together as he considers you. “What's my life to you, anyway? Why do you care?”

Blinking rapidly, you consider the tactfulness of your response, all the while remaining acutely aware of his weight pinning you down and the gun pressed to your temple. “I— you seem, for all intents and purposes, alive. I'd rather put my job on the line than your life. Obviously, you'd rather die than be arrested, so I'm not going to be directly responsible for an action that would lead to your death when you haven't committed a crime worthy of a death penalty.”

“Hmm.” His arms tremble, just a little. It's enough. I'm getting through to him.

His face hardens again. “If you let me walk away from here alive, I swear on rA9 I won't harm her,” the deviant raises his voice so it carries across the rooftop. His fingers subtly tighten around your throat. You take it as a warning. Don't speak.

“You are not alive —”

“Shut up, Connor,” Anderson grits his teeth. “Now’s definitely not the right time to be a smart ass.”

“Of course, Lieutenant,” the android replies. He finally address you. “Detective?”

Don't speak, the deviant reminds you with a silent tap of his fingers. Instead of responding verbally, you give Connor a nod that is small but still very clear affirmation.

“So, how about it? Will you only help one of your own people if the life of a human is on the line?” The deviant asks. His eyes are even more intent now; his lithe form is poised to bolt.

Connor's LED flashes yellow. Anderson watches with a critical eye, his weapon no longer trained on the deviant. You're pretty sure he'll intervene if Connor does something stupid, but for now he's taking a back seat in the conversation. This is Connor's decision whether he likes it or not.

To his credit, he doesn't take very long to reach a decision.

The android inhales sharply despite not having a need for oxygen, lowering his gun upon the release of the breath. “I won't stop you from leaving, 961, but put the gun down.”

“You go first,” the deviant retorts. His weight shifts on top of you, his shin putting even greater pressure on your arm. A small hiss escapes you, more from the sudden change than any amount of pain.

Connor's eyes dart to the deviant's legs, his hands, identifying the points of contact between your body and his. An unidentifiable expression crosses over his face. With great care, the RK800 bends down, setting his firearm down on the cement and kicking it away to a distance he can't easily reach. Anderson follows suit, albeit with considerably more eye-rolling and grumbling. The deviant’s breathing quickens, and in a single fluid movement he's placed your gun down by your head and
taken off sprinting in the opposite direction.

The sudden absence of his weight on your limbs and his hand around your neck leaves you spluttering. You sit up, massaging the tender skin of your throat. “Fuck,” you cough. It's more painful than you expect. “Shit. I'm sorry. I think I made that worse than it needed to be.”

“You think?” Anderson shoots back snidely.

You flush at his bluntness, more than a little chagrined. “I didn't think he would just go jump off the roof like he did.” Chewing on your lip, you continue, “I'm just glad that nobody got hurt. That's what matters, right?”

A familiar pair of legs approaches you, kneeling down so the face of their owner is level with your own. Connor's eyes are warm, kind, and full of concern. You harbor hope that it's real. That it means something. It does mean something, you reason, just maybe not to him. “Do you feel alright, Detective?”

You're dismissive of him at first. You don't need him to baby you, after all. “Yeah. It's not a big deal. I've been through worse scrapes than this.”

“The fact that you have endured more pain in the past does not make any injury, present or future, any less serious.” Your heart nearly stops when he gently cups your face, tilting your chin up, ghosting his fingers along your jaw and down your neck. You shudder, eyes sliding shut. All thoughts of propriety leave your mind. “Does it hurt when I touch you here?”

A small, pained noise escapes you. He hasn't hurt you, not in the slightest. Quite the opposite, in fact. “No. No it doesn't hurt. I'm sure it will later though. Might bruise a little.”

The android looks distrustful of your declaration. “Are you sure? You sound distressed, and your heart is beating at an alarming rate.”

“Oh, give me a fuckin’ break,” Anderson crosses his arms, scowling at the both of you. “Get a room already. I can't take this canoodling bullshit.”

Grabbing your gun, you push yourself to your feet. Blush has colored your cheeks bright red. “Sorry, old man. I didn't mean to defile your pure, innocent eyes by allowing an android to touch my neck.”

“Save it,” he shakes his head at you disparagingly.

The three of you go down the stairs inside the worker's entrance before walking back to the deviant's building together.

“May I ask you a question, Lieutenant?” the android asks as they close the doors of the lieutenant's vehicle.

Lieutenant Anderson sighs. “Sure. Shoot.”

Connor’s face twists in thought. “When you asked that the Detective and myself ‘get a room’, did you mean it literally, or were you implying that we should engage in sexual intercourse in a private location? Most of the results I am finding seem to indicate the latter, but I don’t understand what would lead you to believe that we—”
“Jesus, Connor, you can't just spring that shit on me. I could have a heart attack.”

Scanning...


“Judging by your rate of consumption when it comes to alcoholic beverages and high cholesterol foodstuffs, it would not be out of the question for you to develop a blockage in your circulatory system, which could in turn lead to a heart attack. If you experience any of the following symp—”

“Yeah, yeah, I could die any day. Good. I'm looking forward to it.” He watches Connor out of the corner of his eye. “But seriously, you didn't see the way she was reacting to that touchy shit?”

Searching for results on ‘touchy shit’...

No relevant results found.

“Do you mean when I was analyzing the extent of the damage the deviant did to her? It will result in some bruising, but it could have been much more severe. She was fortunate to have only sustained minor injuries.”

“Okay, yeah, ” Lieutenant Anderson drags a hand down his face, “but did you see the way that she looked at you when you were doing that? Mushiest shit I've seen in years.”

Accessing memory banks...

Accessing optical sensor relay...

The detective’s face in his hands. Her lips part in surprise, but her eyes slide shut as he skims fingers over her skin. She makes a noise of... identifying emotion...pleasure.

“She was pleased?” Connor asks, hesitant.

“Yeah, close enough,” the lieutenant shakes his head, whipping out his phone. “Now hang tight for a second. I gotta make a call.”

You've been sitting in your cruiser for maybe ten minutes, staring at nothing. It's just part of the job, you keep telling yourself. It's not weird. Nothing's wrong. However, when you hear a familiar chime, you practically dive for the phone, desperate for anything that might provide decent distraction. It's a text from Anderson.

4:16 PM

don't bother heading back to the station. i called fowler. he'll give you the rest of the day off.

You type back a quick reply.

What? No way. Do you know how much paperwork we're gonna have to do for this shit?

believe me, i am fully fucking aware. don't worry about it. the best thing about having an android following me around everywhere i go is how fast the guy can type, he's like a goddamn demon.

Before you can respond, a chime notifies you of another message.
he's already agreed to take care of all your shit. if i didn't know better, i'd think he feels bad.

Your chest twinges. Is Connor capable of feeling regret? You doubt he would think it of himself, but maybe he doesn't see himself as clearly as he could. You hammer out another reply.

I mean... He can fill out forms all day if he wants to. I sure as hell won't stop him. :-)

Staring at the simple smiling face, you almost laugh at your own absurdity. Anderson doesn't appear to appreciate it as much.

Is that a fucking smiley emoticon

No?

that's what i thought

You can't help but snort.

...thanks Anderson. I owe you one.

Three little bubbles show up at the bottom of the screen. He's typing, typing, typing. Man, is this gonna be a whole paragraph or what?

But in the end, the message that appears is only a single sentence.

you might as well start calling me hank.

You feel yourself beaming at this small victory as another text box pops up.

and if you ever want to pick up my bar tab, i wouldn't say no

You roll your eyes at the phone.

Listen, I'm not trying to go broke here. But I'll buy you a couple shots no problem.

heh. you got yourself a deal, kid.

When you get home, you breathe a sigh of relief. Even though you've really only been given a few hours off, rather than a full day, it feels like more than enough.

Specifically, it feels like the past two days have spanned an entire week, and now you've finally made it to the weekend.

According to a popular saying, there are three surefire ways to relax. One, hit something. Two, get drunk. Or three, take a bath.

Okay, maybe that's not so much a popular saying as the way you've lived your life the past few years, but it works dammit.

You're not in the mood for the gym. You think you've had more than enough physical exertion for one day. Getting drunk alone is rarely a good idea. But the bath? That sounds heavenly.

Opening the bathroom mirror cabinet, you pull out all the stops. Epsom salt, bubble bath that smells like wild blackberries, carefully placed candles at the edge of the tub. You strip while the bath fills
with foamy water. Then you light the candles, turn off the harsh fluorescents overhead, and sink into
the tub.

A pleased sigh escapes your lips as the water rises up around you, embracing you like the warm arms
of a lover. Arms that are strong, pale, maybe dotted with freckles. And the hands. Fuck, those hands. They would hold you, trace perfect circles over your skin, but they would never do anything you
don't ask them to, anything you don't beg them to. If you wanted, they might glide over your neck,
carefully palm your breasts, trail down your sides, lower, lower until you're gasping out his name.

“Connor.”

That breathy pair of syllables passes through your lips, jarring enough to snap you back to reality in
an instant.

*What. The. Fuck.*

*No. No no no no no holy shit.* You can *not* be fantasizing about an android that you’ve just met.
It’s pathetic, desperate behavior. But you definitely were, and now you’re hot and bothered and
extremely uncomfortable. You think about continuing with the fantasy, but decide against it almost
immediately. Instead, your mind latches on to scraps of poetry from old textbooks. You try reciting
them mentally, allowing the coiled up tightness in your core to ease away, however painstaking it is.
It had felt *wrong,* like you were taking advantage of Connor’s innocence for your own pleasure,
even if it was purely in your imagination.

Hell. There probably isn't a single romantic line of code in his programming.

You stay in the bath until you’ve worked the soreness out of your muscles, but no longer than that.
You blow out the candles, drain the tub, and get dressed in something more comfortable: a sports
bra, basketball shorts, and a faded t-shirt.

You look at the digital clock on the counter. 5:34 PM. You still have a few hours until you might
have to risk seeing Connor. For a moment, you consider picking up your phone, asking Anders—
*Hank* —if he’d let Connor stay with him tonight. You could tell him that you weren't feeling well. It's
believable. The deviant situation had shaken you, certainly, but the recent incident in the bath had
been significantly more concerning.

Not that Hank needs to know about the recent incident in the bath.

No, you decide. *I've already made enough trouble for the man. I can just buckle down and ignore
my feelings like an adult. They're probably not even feelings. Maybe you're just horny. Adrenaline
will do that to you, right? So that means it's not even a serious problem. Right?*

*Right.*

You think there's a slight chance that you're lying to yourself.

Chapter End Notes

I feel like I did Rupert a little dirty in this chapter, but I guess for the purpose of this fic
we'll say he's a survivor with very little regard for humans.
A Hairy Situation

Chapter Notes

Hello, lovely readers! I just wanted to thank all of you again for your kind words and support, so thank you!

When you pull up in front of the station, Connor is nowhere to be found. Sighing, you coax the car away from the curb in search of a parking space. Once you're satisfactorily situated, you go inside, only to find the android sitting at his desk. *He must still be working,* you surmise. The majority of the other detectives have cleared out, although some androids and the odd beat cop still mill around the place.

You sidle up to him as quietly as you're able. When you're close enough to be able to touch his chair, you speak. “Hey, bud, you about ready to wrap up?” Connor glances over at you; he doesn’t appear to be surprised by your presence. Why would he be? He is an android designed specifically to observe every detail in his surroundings. That includes you.

“I think so, Detective,” the RK800 nods curtly. The multiple windows he had pulled up on the terminal close in rapid succession. He rises gracefully, pushing the desk chair back to its rightful place. “Are we returning to your apartment now?” He doesn’t look at you, his attention drawn instead to something behind you.

“Yes, we are. Unless you have something else planned.” When he doesn’t react to your feeble stab at a joke, your smile fades. You notice that his tie is crooked, his collar uneven, his shirt not as neatly tucked in as it usually is. “Connor. Are you okay?”

“Of course, Detective,” he says in a rather concerning monotone. He switches his attention back to you.

“Connor…” you turn, wondering what he had been looking at. There wasn’t anything noteworthy behind you. No people, no interesting objects, just a bunch of empty desks. Miller, Stanford, Carpenter, and… Reed. “Did Reed do something to you?”

The android offers you a small, almost indulgent smile. “It’s nothing to be worried about, Detective. He did not harm me. And even if he did, I am a machine worth a small fortune. He would probably regret causing extensive damage to my chassis.”

“Great. But no, seriously,” you narrow your eyes at him, mind racing with possibilities. “What did he do? I need to know how badly I gotta whoop his ass the next time I see him.”

Connor frowns at that. “A violent encounter with Detective Reed would not be a positive addition to your personal record.”

“Fuck my personal rec—”

“It is possible that you might also be removed from the deviant investigation as a form of disciplinary action. That’s not something you would want, is it, Detective?”

“…No.”
You’re about to ask him about Reed again, and Connor knows it, but his model is built for negotiation, for steering conversations in its favor. “What happened with the Montgomery case? Your end-of-investigation reports were...perplexing.”

Your face pales. “How do you know about that?”

“I have had more than enough time to read through your records at the DPD,” Connor says with the same nonchalance you might expect from someone commenting on the weather. “You were investigating Howard Montgomery, a tycoon within the solar energy sector, because you had discovered evidence that he was facilitating the smuggling of red ice into the city.”

“Yep. That’s it. Come on. We can talk about this in the car,” you grumble. Connor nods, adjusts his tie, and follows you out the lobby and into the parking lot. “So tell me what you think you know, and I’ll fill in the rest of the details.”

Connor cocks his head to the side. “You had multiple stakeouts monitoring Montgomery’s place of residence, and you infiltrated private events to learn more about any questionable activities he might have been orchestrating.”

“Mm hmm,” your smile has a sharp edge to it. “And who was my partner for that case?”

His LED flickers yellow for a second. “You were partnered with Officer Gavin Reed for the duration of that investigation.”

“Right. Notice that his title was officer rather than detective.” You hop into the driver’s seat and Connor mirrors you, closing the passenger side door as gently as possible. “Well, we were watching and waiting for a few months until one day our guy finally slipped. A fairly low-profile dealer, Joaquin Hernandez, cropped up at some fundraising gala pretending to be a guest. He was passing on a message that listed out red ice drop off points for the next month. I spotted him talking to Montgomery, saw the hand-off go down, and I caught Reed up on everything I’d noticed. My plan was to call in backup, detain Hernandez, and take Montgomery in for questioning. Then we’d be able to see if their stories matched up, and maybe get Hernandez to sell out for a shorter sentence.” A scowl contorts your features, and Connor, who had been about to ask a question, wisely decides not to interrupt.

“But Reed? Ugh. He’d been sitting at the bar, just sipping on a martini while I’d been doing the real work. When I told him, he got this stupid grin on his face. Then he patted me on the shoulder, told me he’d take care of it, and swaggered off to go chat Montgomery up.” You sigh loudly through your nose, putting on your turn signal more aggressively than is actually warranted. “So he goes over to the guy, sits down with him, loosens him up a little. Meanwhile I’m freaking the fuck out because if Reed screwed it up, we would have lost the only major lead we’d found. God. In the end, long story short: Reed puts in the call before I do, Hernandez and Montgomery get taken into custody, I get stabbed in the thigh with a fork, and Montgomery gets off on the condition that he’d shut down his red ice operation or the city of Detroit would make sure Montgomery Solar took a beating.”

Your teeth grit together. “What Fowler hadn’t told either of us before we’d started out was that there was an opportunity for a promotion on the line. Reed ended up getting it. It took me another two and a half years of extra work busting low-grade crooks before I became a bona fide detective, and Reed’s held it over my head ever since.”

When you finish your tale of woe, you’re almost shaking with suppressed frustration. *God. I fucking hate Gavin Reed.* Your apartment complex pulls into view and you wait for the automatic gates to slide open with impatience. Connor shifts in his seat, looking once more like he wants to ask you a question. You take pity on the android, realizing that your tangent had rambled on for far longer than...
it needed to. “What’s up?”

“You said that you were stabbed in the thigh. With a fork?”

“Yep,” your lips curl up into a wry smirk. “Not one of my finest moments, that’s for sure. I can show you the scar later.”

The android nods, digesting this. You take the key out of the car’s ignition and swing your door open. Connor follows suit. “And this...Montgomery case? That is why there is so much aggression between you and Detective Reed?”

You snort. “Oh, it’s far from the *only* reason. Besides, I notice that you have yet to answer my question. What did Reed do to you before I got there? What did he say?”

“It really is nothing concerning, Detective,” Connor says. His tone is smooth, even.

The look you give him might best be described as exasperated. “Well I’m concerned anyway. Spill the beans.”

“There are no beans in my possession, and so I cannot spill any.” The both of you pass through the lobby area and approach the elevator. Connor presses a button on the wall and you can hear an electric thrumming from the other side of the door.

“Ha ha. You’re funny.” With a quiet ding, the elevator doors glide open. Both of you move to step inside. Once you’re a few floors up, you hit the bright red button labeled STOP. Connor watches you with an expression of mild alarm. His LED stays blue, but it flickers as he processes your narrowed eyes and defensive stance. “I’m not messing around here, Connor. Please, just...”

He straightens his tie, even though it hadn’t been out of place to begin with. That strikes you as a worrying sign. “Very well, Detective. I had just finished visiting Carlos Ortiz’s android when Detective Reed grabbed me by the collar and forced me up against a wall.” Connor swallows, and when he speaks again it is with the all too familiar voice of Gavin Reed. It feels *wrong* having words as hateful as his spewing from Connor’s lips, but you were the one who wanted to know.

“Hey there, plastic dick! Go get me a fuckin’ coffee!”

Connor’s brow furrows as he recalls the memory. “I made an attempt to extricate myself from the situation, but Detective Reed prevented me successfully doing so.”

“Did I say you could fuckin’ leave, dipshit?”

“I informed Detective Reed that in order to fulfill his request, I would need to have full mobility, but he ignored me.”

“Watch yourself, you hear me? The bitch you’re working with? She won’t be around to pick your skinny robot ass up every time you get knocked over.”

Your face turns an angry red at that. You feel your hands clench into fists at your sides.

“I asked him to clarify that he was referring to you.”

“Yeah, plastic. Got a problem with that?”

Connor has fished his coin out of his pocket and is currently rolling it over his knuckles. “I asked him if he would refrain from using such derogatory language when speaking about you. You are his
coworker, after all."

"Pfft. What do you care how I talk about her? You like her? Think she cares about you?" Reed snorts. "You know, for a machine, you're really fucking stupid."

"I told Detective Reed that he was making a number of unfounded statements. Then he let go of me and I returned to my workstation."

You look at the android in front of you appreciatively. "Thank you, Connor, for standing up for me. You didn't have to do that."

"I... didn't?" He tilts his head to one side.

"Well, no," you shrug, smirking. "Not unless you have some sort of pre-programmed protocol for defending your friends against insults."

His features sharpen at that. He's distressed. "If you are implying that I have deviated from my—"

"No! No," you cut him off in earnest, "I didn't mean it like that. It's just that you chose to speak up for me instead of staying silent and I wanted to let you know that I'm grateful for it."

Connor's LED pulses a calm blue. "I see. And you consider us to be...friends?" His eyes are dark, intense, inquisitive. You're quickly lost in them.

For the first time you realize how close together you are, alone in this small space. It's late enough that it could be hours before another person needs to use the elevator, and this isn't even the only one in the building. You take an unconscious step closer to the android. He watches you with a measured gaze. "Sure, yeah. Course we're friends."

"Okay." Connor nods, lips twitching up into a small smile. "Your feelings of friendship will likely increase our cooperative abilities, making us more effective during the investigation."

"You know, that's exactly what I was thinking," you quip. Even as you try to assume an air of lightheartedness, you feel a sinking sensation in your gut. Damn. I just got friend-zoned by an android. Huh.

Connor flashes a grin that is almost painfully bright. "Good. I'm glad that we're on the same page, Detective." He takes a step closer to you, well into your invisible Personal Space bubble, but you definitely do not mind. "If it's alright with you, I have a personal question. Lieutenant Anderson brought my attention to something that...confused me."

A laugh bubbles up past your lips. "Yeah, well, Lieutenant Anderson's a confusing guy. What's got your gears in a jam?"

"I'm curious about your reaction on the rooftop. When I touched you, you made a puzzling sound."

"Oh, um, er, elaborate? Please?" As you realize what's just popped unbidden out of your mouth, your eyes widen. "Shit. I wasn’t trying to imply—"
“I believe that I, at least, have been programmed to respond similarly to positive physical stimulation from a human. I do not feel pleasure, of course. Machines do not feel emotions. It was certainly surprising to discover, though,” Connor tells you conversationally. “I developed this hypothesis shortly after speaking with the lieutenant. It explains what happened when you touched my hair outside of the station this morning.”

“That’s… cool,” you mutter, wondering what purpose it could serve the android by telling you this. Now all you can fixate on is the idea of running your fingers through his dark hair, probably making a valiant attempt to smooth back that stubborn lock of hair falling over his forehead.

You know what? Fuck it.

You reach one of your hands up, palm facing him and fingers spread in supplication. “Can I try that again? The hair thing, I mean. Just so you can make sure?”

Connor stills abruptly, his LED flashing a yellow warning. You can practically hear the artificial synapses firing in his head. “That would not be unacceptable. I should know how much of a liability this sensory input will be in the field,” he finally says, dipping his head a little lower so you have easier access. Breathless, you skim your fingers along his temple, hover at his hairline, and, wanting to properly savor the moment, you rake them through his hair with excruciating slowness. It’s so much silkier, so much softer than you remember, that before you’re fully aware of your own actions, you’ve placed your other hand on his shoulder to steady yourself. Being this near to him, it’s dizzying. It doesn’t help that Connor is leaning ever so slightly into your hand, into your touch. His eyes are squeezed shut, his forehead wrinkled as he focuses on pure physical sensation.

You continue running your hand through his hair, just as enthralled with the rhythm as Connor appears to be, but as soon as your fingers ghost over the shell of his ear, he gasps quietly, eyes flying open. One of his hands whips up to catch your wrist, pulling it away from himself with surprising gentleness. “Oh, hell, Connor. I’m—I’m so sorry. That was uncalled for;” you blush furiously, practically leaping away from him and toward the elevator floor panel. You jab the button marked with the number seven and the elevator jostles back to life.

Connor shrugs lightly, although the yellow LED at his temple tells you that he's not as calm as he appears to be. “It is alright, Detective. I simply was not expecting that part of me to be so…” receptive.”

Your hands have curled into tight balls at your sides, not out of frustration or of anger, but as a warning to yourself. You absolutely need to work this little infatuation out of your system, and right now that means completely quashing any urge you might have to touch Connor, to hear that little gasp again, to loosen his tie, to kiss all the way down his jaw— no! This is exactly what you cannot be thinking about.

At all.

Ever.

“Detective?” Connor taps your shoulder three times, as rhythmic as a metronome.

“Yeah?” you ask. A seed of hope buds inside of you. Hope for what, you have no time to figure out, because it’s immediately dashed by the android’s gesture toward the open elevator doors. “Right,” you nod, leading the way to your apartment. Your key turns in the lock, the door swings open, and Catapult meows a greeting from the couch armrest. “Hey, do you think you could feed her? Her dish is in the kitchen and her food is on the counter.”
“Of course, Detective,” Connor nods, jaw setting in determination. Great. He can be occupied with a new mission. while you can go take of your bra and brush your teeth. “Ah. Detective?”

“Hmm?” You look over your shoulder at the android. His LED blinks a rapid yellow.

*That’s concerning.*

He meets your stare evenly. “I have just received a homicide report. It is suspected to be the work of an android. I believe it would be prudent to investigate immediately.”

You groan. Loudly. Here you were in your comfy clothes, right about to get ready for bed, and you’re being dragged out to a crime scene. “Fine. Let me change into my uniform.”

“You wear a uniform?” Connor asks. He sounds surprised.

“Sure,” you roll your eyes, snorting. “Pants, shirt, shoes, jacket, belt, badge, gun, done.”

“Detective, you were given the rest of today off by Captain Fowler. You do not need to--”

“Mm hmm. Yep. How are you planning on getting there again?”

“I cannot technically set foot on site without the presence of Lieutenant Anderson, and he has a car.”

“Okay,” you smirk at him. “And how were you planning on getting to Hank’s house?”

Connor frowns, considering feasible options. “There is a distinct possibility that he could be at a bar, as well. But... I could pay for a taxi.”

“Funny, but no. I’m taking you there, and then I’ll follow you guys over to the scene.” You pivot gracefully on your heel.

Connor opens his mouth, then closes it again. His LED whirls yellow. “But Captain Fowler has ordered that y--”

“Sure,” you call out from inside of your bedroom, “but also, and I want you to really absorb the nuance of my reasoning here, I don’t give a single *fuck* what Fowler said. It’s not like I’ll make him pay me overtime. I genuinely want to come, okay?”

Regardless of what Connor wants you to do, you are going to this crime scene, and a moderately attractive android detective isn’t going to stop you.

Connor has been holding down Hank’s doorbell for a solid thirty seconds now. The incessant wailing was enough to wake the dog inside, but the old detective? Not so much. You’re definitely concerned. What if an intruder had broken in? What if Hank is injured? You can tell that Connor’s thinking has gone in a similar direction.

It’s entirely plausible that Hank might just be waiting the two of you out, not wanting to leave the comfort of his bed or his home. It’s just that, in Detroit, things that are normally considered implausible have a real peculiar way of becoming probable.

The RK800 gestures that you follow him, and you keep close. The ground is muddy with the rain, and your feet make wet schlopping noises as you trek around the side of Hank’s house. From one of the windows shines a soft yellow light. You could probably see inside pretty easily through that. The
both of you edge up to the glass, and what you see sends a jolt of icy fear through your veins. Hank is lying flat on his back, completely still, the wooden chair he had been sitting on knocked over on its side. The table next to him is littered with pizza boxes, beer bottles, styrofoam cups, and white takeout bags. “Oh fuck,” you curse. “Is he breathing? Is he dead? Can you even tell?”

Connor’s LED pulses blue as he analyzes the situation before him. “The lieutenant is still alive, but he is unconscious. I will need to be closer to examine him properly.” He raises his voice to be heard on the other side of the window. “Lieutenant Anderson!”

Hank stays as still as a bump on a log, completely inert. You hadn’t expected the man to suddenly spring back to life, but it’s disappointing just the same. Because you’re so intent on Lieutenant Anderson’s prostrate form, you jump when Connor abruptly smashes his elbow into the window, shattering it on impact. “Connor? What the hell was that?”

“Problem solving, Detective,” the android winks at you. He winks at you. What? Then, with a running start, he propels himself through the incredibly dangerous broken window, tucking and rolling to an upright position with nary a scrape to show for it. Suddenly, a mound of growling fur bounds toward him. “Uh, easy. Easy, Sumo. See? I know your name,” he raises his hands to the dog, a clear gesture of submission. “I’m here to save your owner, and so is she,” Connor points at you, as though that will be more helpful for the animal’s understanding.

“Show off,” you mutter, easing through the window and gently lowering yourself onto the glass-filled carpet with a much greater degree of care. By now, Sumo is chomping away at the food in his bowl, blissfully unaware of the danger Hank is in. Connor is crouched over Hank’s body. You cross over to him, picking up the bottle lying just next to Hank’s splayed open hand. Scotch whiskey. “Scotch?” Your nose wrinkles. “Scotch isn’t even that good, Hank.”

And then you notice the gun in Connor’s hand. A .357 Magnum.

“Aw, jeez,” your heart lurches. You’d known that Hank was in a rough place, mentally, emotionally, and physically. You knew he drank himself into a stupor most nights. You knew that when he was out in the field he was notorious for picking fights and behaving recklessly. Somehow, it hadn’t occurred to you that he was this level of suicidal.

Connor gives the revolver an experimental turn, pops it open and looks inside. “There is only one bullet loaded into the cylinder.” His brow creases. “The next shot would have killed him.”

“He was playing Russian Roulette?” Tears sting at your eyes but you blink them away rapidly. Hank hadn’t just passed out before he could shoot himself in the head. He had been making a game of it. Gambling on whether he’d hear an empty click or the explosion of a bullet shooting through his skull. In this particular case, you suppose, drinking himself into a stupor might have actually saved his life.

Connor kneels down beside Hank’s face. ”Lieutenant?” He calls softly. When there’s no response, the android gently taps the side of his face. “Wake up, Lieutenant!” Hank grumbles and blubbers, but otherwise stays unconscious. Connor draws his arm back and slaps Hank clean across the face. “It’s me, Connor!” he helpfully informs the now definitely conscious Hank. “I’m going to sober you up for your own safety,” the android says, taking one of Hank’s arms and looping it over his shoulders. “I have to warn you, it may be unpleasant.”

“Hey!” Hank bares his teeth at Connor, face contorting in anger and confusion. “Leave me alone, you fuckin’ android! Get the fuck outta my house!”

Connor ignores his protests, hoisting him up in a display of inhuman strength. “Thank you in
advance for your cooperation.”

“Hey…” Hank garbles on, slurring his words drunkenly. “Get the…fuck…get outta my… house…”

You skirt around the table from the other side, racing to get the bathroom door open and the toilet seat up, just in case Hank has to puke his guts out later. Connor helps the staggering lieutenant into the small room, offering you a grateful nod as you clear out.

“Oh, I think I’m gonna be… sick,” Hank moans. It’s a pitiful sight. He’s clammy, an alarming shade of green, and he reeks of sweat, booze, and old takeout.

Connor walks Hank to the bathtub before lowering him into it. “What the--? No. No, thanks. I don’t wanna bath,” he grumbles, making to stand up.

“Sorry, Lieutenant,” Connor pushes him back down before he can get fully upright. “It’s for your own good.”

Hank groans again, looking around at himself and his surroundings. He reaches out vaguely with both arms, likely wanting to find something he could latch onto for stability. Connor reaches for the bath faucet, giving one of the knobs a few good turns. Water spits out from the showerhead, splattering down onto the still fully-clothed Hank. “Owuahhh! Turn it off! TURN IT OFF!” Hank howls, flopping around in the tub like some sickly, oversized fish. Connor relents after a few more seconds, and you have to admit, Hank seems ten times more lucid than he had been earlier.

The lieutenant, shuddering from the shock of cold water, blinks up at Connor with a new clarity. “What the fuck are you doing here?” he asks. Then he catches sight of you lingering in the bathroom threshold. “And you brought her? Why the fuck did you bring her?”

Connor tilts his head, considering him. “A homicide was reported forty-three minutes ago. We couldn’t find you at Jimmy’s bar, so we came to see if you were home.”

“Jesus,” Hank lurches forward so that he’s sitting on the edge of the tub. “I must be the only cop in the world who gets assaulted in his own home by his own fuckin’ android.”

“And me,” you point out wryly. “I’m here, too.”

“Why can’t you just leave me alone?” he glares at the both of you.

Connor, very hesitantly, places a hand on Hank’s shoulder. “I can get them to drop you from the case, that way I could focus on my mission and you cou--”

“All your mission? That’s all you fuckin’ care about, huh?” he snaps, shaking Connor's hand off.

Connor’s voice becomes gentler, more understanding. “Lieutenant, you aren’t yourself. I think you should--”

“Ah, beat it, you hear me?” Hank snarls, bracing his arm to help himself up from the tub’s edge. When he’s fully upright, he stands half a head taller than Connor. “Get the hell outta here!”

All of a sudden, Hank’s bravado vanishes, and he teeters precariously on his feet. Connor grabs him around the middle, steadying him and carefully lowering him back into the tub. Hank slumps forward, staring vacantly into his lap.

He’s loads better than he had been earlier. Honestly, you’d prefer that he stay home and recover than go gallivanting across the city. Of course, you know that Anderson has to be there for Connor’s
sake. Maybe you can prod things along. “Come on, Connor. Let’s just let the man rest.”

Connor looks surprised, then calculating. He’s not very verbally resistant to the idea.

“Hey, wait a minute,” Hank mumbles at the retreating android. “The.. homicide. What do we know about it?”

Connor smiles his small smile at you before turning back to give Hank the few details we’ve been made aware of. There's been a man found dead in a sex club, and there are signs of possible android involvement. No biggie.

“Humph,” Hank grunts. “Might as well get some air,” he blinks hazily up at Connor. “There are some clothes in the bedroom there.”

“I'll go get them,” Connor volunteers. You let him go alone, curious as to what he might pick out when given a choice. Just a few seconds after Connor has vanished into Hank’s bedroom, the lieutenant lunges for the toilet bowl. When he vomits, you’re hit with the toxic combination of bile, whiskey, and pizza. It’s a good thing that years on crime scenes had practically trained the gag reflex out of you. You go off to the kitchen to hunt down a clean glass and fill it with water. Acid burn is never pleasant.

The sound of Hank’s puking session only increases in volume, and you shudder. Connor, who has ostensibly delivered a fresh change of clothes to Hank, slips discreetly from the bathroom. Androids are so damn polite, all the time. That's always been something you'd noticed about them, admired about them. You wished more humans could spare a little time for pleases and thank you's.

He walks toward the table Hank had been lying next to, curiously picking up a picture frame that had been lying face down on it. “What's it a picture of?” you ask, genuinely wanting to know.

“Cole Anderson” Connor replies. “Born in 2029 and deceased in 2035.”

A soft “fuck” escapes you. The three years that had passed seemed both extremely short and like eons had gone by. Many of the officers that had been at the station at the time knew about it, although it was rarely spoken about.

You shake your head at yourself, heading back to the bathroom with a mind to leave the glass of water there. Before you can, however, Hank emerges from the room, dressed in a blue and orange striped shirt. You shove the water into his hands. “Drink this. Slowly.”

Hank gives you a sour look, but he raises the glass to his lips and takes a few gulps anyway. He gives it back to you only half empty, but you'll take what you can get.

The massive St. Bernard, Sumo, pads up to Hank, letting out a small whine. The noise brings a reluctant smile to the lieutenant’s face. “Be a good dog, Sumo. I won't be long.”

With that, he looks first at Connor, then at you, snorts, and heads for the door. He's remarkably steady on his feet, all things considered. You wonder if this is a common occurrence for him, except that he's usually alone. The image of Hank waking up collapsed in a heap and having to drag himself all the way to his bathroom makes you shudder.

Then, a worse idea pops into your head. If the two of you hadn't shown up when you had, it's very possible that Hank would have choked on his own vomit and died here without anyone being the wiser.

The thought sends chills down your spine.
“Detective?” Connor calls, still lingering at the house’s threshold. “Have you changed your mind about coming to the crime scene?”

Forcing yourself to smile, you reply, “Not a chance, bud.” You hurry past him, into the drizzly nighttime, and clamber into your police cruiser. The car hums to life, and after a minute or so, you're following Hank and Connor down the street on the way to the most prominent club in the city.

Could today be any more of a roller coaster?
Alright fellas... I wrote all of this today because I'll be out of town for a while and I'd rather be early than late. I love you guys a lot! Thanks for reading!

A bright yellow notice pings at the bottom of Connor's visual overlay.

You have now reached destination: Eden Club.

He blinks it away. He hadn't needed the alert to tell him that. The neon purple lettering and the officers standing guard outside made the location obvious enough.

The lieutenant, who had been sitting in the passenger seat next to him, groans and massages his temples. “Ah… feels like there's somebody playing with a drill inside my skull.” He looks out the car window, scowling. “You sure this is the place?”

Connor blinks at him. “This was the address listed in the report.”

“Right,” The lieutenant sighs. “Okay. Let's get going.” He pops the lock on the door, swinging it open. Even the simple motion of swinging his legs to the ground has Lieutenant Anderson pausing for breath. Still, the man pushes through whatever discomfort he may be experiencing in order to clamber from the vehicle.

Connor removes the key from the ignition, makes sure the headlights are off, unbuckles his seat belt, and cracks open his door. In a smooth movement, he goes from tucked into the seat of the car to fully upright in the street. He closes the door with precisely enough force to shut properly, but no more than that. Slamming doors is a human quirk, or a deviant one. Connor is neither.

Scanning his surroundings once more, Connor notices the arrival of Detroit Police Department Cruiser #13. Your vehicle had gotten caught up at a light, so it is only logical that you arrive two minutes and seventeen seconds later. If anything, you had arrived even earlier than you ought to have. Running some quick calculations using the timer on the lights at that particular intersection along with the posted speed limits on the roads between there and the Eden Club, it should have been an additional three minutes and two seconds before you arrived.

Connor narrows his eyes at you. You have successfully found a parking spot and are currently racing over to him. You hold an arm above your head as if that will shield your entire body from the rain, and a wide smile curls across your lips. “Speeding is technically illegal. You do understand that, Detective?”

“Wha-?” you halt dead in your tracks. Your heart rate elevates to 92 bpm. “Um, yeah. This is a crime scene though, isn’t it? That’s a bit more urgent than following traffic laws to a T,” you roll your eyes at him. “Speaking of… We should probably head in and see what’s what.”

“Connor, what are you waitin’ for? Get a move on!” Lieutenant Anderson yells from his position near the club’s entryway.
Connor stiffens, pivoting toward the older man. “Of course, Lieutenant.”

“We’re coming, Hank!” you punch Connor lightly on the arm, lengthening your stride to get out of the rain as quickly as possible. Connor detects no aggressive intent in the action, so he concludes that it must have been yet another human quirk. A friendly gesture, perhaps. You had told him that you considered him to be a friend.

The three of you walk through the hall leading to the front door, backlit with dark blues and purples to provide a cooler atmosphere. “Sexiest androids in town,” the lieutenant chuckles as he crosses the electric yellow police tape. “Now I know why you insisted on coming here, Connor!”

You huff out a laugh, but Connor says nothing. His processors are whirring, clearing out all distractions of both external and internal origin. He’s on the scene of a crime scene now. All of his analytical faculties need to be directed at the case at hand.

After the deviant called Rupert had escaped today, he had been forced to report his own failure to Amanda in the Zen garden. He would not fail this time. He can’t disappoint Amanda.

He can’t disappoint CyberLife.

**Mission Objective updated: Gain access to the crime scene.**

A set of sleek black doors, emblazoned with a purplish pink curlicue E, slide open in front of the trio. Beyond it are six glass cylinders, each containing a Traci model clad only in Eden Club undergarments. A dark skinned Traci bats her eyelashes at Connor, subtly turning so that he can see more of her.

“Connor,” Lieutenant Anderson barks from the next set of doors. “The fuck are you doin’?”

“Coming, Lieutenant,” Connor answers, curt. He had hardly been ogling the android. He was simply observing what was around him.

The next room is large and oblong, and there are yet more Tracis in glass cases. Additionally, the room contains a trio of glittery fuchsia poles on raised platforms; a male HR400 twirls around the first one while two female WR400s slide sensually down the second and third.

“Damn,” the detective murmurs appreciatively. Connor follows the path of your eyes to the male Traci on the pole. He is well-muscled, programmed to move with confidence and grace.

“You find that model pleasing?” Connor asks you. He’s not sure why he wants to know. He doesn’t want to know. He doesn’t want anything. To want is to be deviant. Connor is not deviant.

*Software instability increased.*

“Eh,” you shrug. “Not so much the model, more what the model is doing.” Your gaze flicks over to Connor curiously. “I just admire the sheer physical ability that goes into the dancing. I know he’s an android. I know he has strength beyond what any human is capable of. Still, pole dancing is not something that I could do, and I respect that. Humans have a tendency to admire the things we can’t have for ourselves.”

As if it had heard you, it hooks a leg around the pole, lifting itself up and arching its back. It looks over his shoulder at you, offering you a dazzling white smile. You return a small wave while ducking your head.

“You are self-conscious,” Connor deduces.
Clearing your throat, you turn abruptly back to Connor; a smirk plastered on your face. “Brilliant detective work, sir. But about the Traci, why do you ask?”

“I’m not sure,” Connor tells you with complete sincerity.

You hum in reply, appearing as if you want to continue, but you are never given the opportunity to do so.

“You’re not gonna take my license are you? I mean, ha, I had nothing to do with this!” The voice of the Eden Club’s owner, Floyd Mills, carries over the low pulsing beats of the club music. The man’s heart is racing. He’s sweating and fidgeting. He’s nervous.

Detective Ben Collins, holding a clipboard and pen, explains the situation to the frantic club owner. “The investigation is ongoing, sir. I can’t tell you anything for the moment.” He looks up. *Expression: relief* washes over him when he notices Lieutenant Anderson’s presence. “Hey, Hank!”

“Hey, Ben,” the lieutenant nods at the silver-haired detective in greeting. “How’s it goin’?”

“It’s that room there,” Detective Collins points at a room marked with a red holographic sign spelling out the word OCCUPIED. “Oh, uh, by the way…” he grimaces apologetically at you where you stand at Connor’s side, “Gavin’s in there too.”

You tense minutely. Lieutenant Anderson only sighs. “Oh, great. A dead body and an asshole, just what I needed.” Connor is fairly certain that the lieutenant is using sarcasm. “Come on,” he continues, walking toward the indicated room. It glides open with a small hiss, and Connor perks up at the sight of the half-clad corpse sprawled on the bed. Crime solving is what he’s built to do.

“Lieutenant Anderson, his plastic pet, and,” Detective Reed bares his teeth at you in a feral imitation of a smile, “you. The fuck are you guys doin’ here?”

Connor decides to take the pleasant, non-abrasive approach. “We have been assigned all cases involving androids.”

“Oh yeah,” Detective Reed raises an eyebrow. “Well you’re wasting your time. Just some pervert who, uh,” he winks at you, “got more action than he could handle.” His laugh sounds artificial.

“You trying to imply something, Reed?” You plant a hand on your hip, near enough to your gun to draw attention to it. Connor predicts only a 32% chance of you opening fire on Detective Reed, but he is coming to realize that statistical likelihood tells him nothing when trying to predict human behavior.

His eyes narrow dangerously. “You tell me, sweetheart.”

The heart rates in the room skyrocket, with you and Detective Reed being the source of the change.

Just as Connor is considering what he can say to alleviate the tension in the room, Lieutenant Anderson clears his throat pointedly. “We’ll have a look anyway, if you don’t mind.”

Detective Reed snorts derisively. “Come on. Let’s go,” he gestures to the other officers in the room. “It’s, uh, starting to stink of booze in here.” He scowls at the lieutenant, and shoulder checks Connor on the way out. When you open your mouth to call him out on his poor behavior, he just blows you a small kiss. The gesture, one that Connor is fairly certain is meant to express affection for another, seems to be expressing anything but. Connor nearly steps toward the man, but stops himself immediately.
Software instability increased.

Officer Miller follows closely behind, to your surprise. “Good night, Lieutenant,” he nods respectfully. When he meets your eyes, he gives you an apologetic smile. “Night, Detective.”

“You too, Miller. Get back in time to tuck your kids in, alright?”

“Sure,” his eyes twinkle at the thought. “That might actually be doable tonight if we finish quick enough.”

“We’ll do our best to analyze the scene in a timely manner,” Connor puts in.

Officer Miller likely hadn’t been expecting him to speak, judging by the look of surprise on his face. “Right. You… you do that, RoboCop. I’d appreciate it.”

“Connor,” you correct him unconsciously.

“What?”

“His name’s Connor.”

Officer Miller furrows his brows at your insistence. “Oh. Yeah, of course. Sorry. I’d appreciate it… Connor.” He gives you one last smile before hurrying out after Detective Reed.

“Now if you’re done goofing around,” Lieutenant Anderson glowers at you both from by the bed, “we’ve got an investigation on our hands.”

Connor looks from the victim tangled up in red silk sheets to the Traci crumpled in a heap at one corner of the room. The walls are covered in LED panels that display abstract patterns of shimmering swirls in deep reds and lighter pinks.

Mission Objective updated: Investigate the crime scene.

To achieve mission objective: Analyze victim. Analyze android.

Lieutenant Anderson stands over the victim, quietly observing. You have pulled out your notebook and pencil, ready to write down whatever you deem important. Connor decides to analyze the android first. There might be some potential to salvage some memory from it. He kneels down beside it, attention drawn to the streak of blue thirium leaking from her right nostril and dribbling down her chin. He swipes a finger through the fluid before popping the digit into his mouth.

“Woah, woah, woah, hey, hey! Argh! Connor, you’re so disgusting. I think I’m gonna puke again.” With a quick look over his shoulder, Connor determines that Lieutenant Anderson does actually look like he might be green. Connor doesn’t apologize. He hadn’t designed himself to have a sample analysis function installed in his mouth.

As his tongue comes into contact with the blue blood, the thousands of analytical sensors feed him a structural breakdown of it.
With his fingers still stained blue with an android’s blood, Connor allows the artificial skin of his fingers to recede, revealing the porcelain white of his android skeleton. He places his fingers carefully on the android’s temples.

Diagnosis in process…

Results found:

Selector #5402 is **CRITICALLY DAMAGED**

Biocomponent #6970 is **CRITICALLY DAMAGED**

“What did you just do?” you ask Connor when he stands up again.

“I interfaced with it so I could run an internal diagnostic check and determine which of its parts have been damaged,” he explains. Your pencil scratches across one of the pages in your notebook while the two of you approach the victim.

“And did you figure out what was wrong with her? Can you fix it?”

“To the first question, the answer is yes. To the second one, I’m not sure yet.” His optical sensors skim over the body before him.

Deceased: Graham, Michael.

**Height: 6’ 2”** - **Weight: 192.4 lbs.**

**Estimated time of death: 6:24 PM.**

No sign of cardiac arrest. Not cause of death.
Severe bruising around neck, signs of strangulation.

Cause of death: asphyxiation.

Scene reconstruction initializing

Connor’s optical sensors suddenly register his surroundings in hues of deeper greys and blues. Brilliant lines of white and yellow fizz into place as he reconstructs the crime. There’s the silhouette of Graham lying on the bed, first he is alive, then he is dead. Who killed him? There is really only one logical answer: a Traci, lying on top of him, had strangled the man who had purchased it for the night.

Scene reconstruction complete.

Connor blinks as his optical sensors switch abruptly back to color. He looks to you and Lieutenant Anderson. “He didn’t die of a heart attack, he was strangled.”

“Yeah. I saw the bruising on the neck,” the lieutenant agrees, shifting some cushions on a pristine white couch backed against an adjacent wall.

“Me too,” you nod, flipping your notebook around so Connor can see where you had written ‘neck bruising, caused by hands, strangulation?’.

“It doesn’t actually prove anything, though,” Lieutenant Anderson corrects you. “Coulda been rough play.”

“There’s something we’re missing,” Connor mutters, scanning around the room for the seventh time since entering.

“The android,” both you and Lieutenant Anderson begin at the same time. You gesture that he continue, and he does. “Do you think you can read its memory?”

“Could you see what happened that way?” your brows furrow. Theoretically, if Connor could wake the android up again, you would have a legitimate witness to the crime.

Connor frowns slightly, getting on his knees by the android once more. His skin recedes, and he takes hold of the android’s arm.

Memory probe procedure initiated…

ERROR!

Android is malfunctioning or damaged! Please call a CyberLife mechanic if you would like to repair WR400 #429 671 942. You can reach CyberLife with this numb--

Connor blinks the message away before it can finish scrolling by.

Android reactivation required.

“The only way to access its memory is to reactivate it,” Connor informs the two of you.

You bite your lip, worried. “Will you be able to?”

“It’s badly damaged,” he replies, sounding incredibly uncertain. With his porcelain hand, he makes
the skin of the Traci’s stomach fade to white as well. “If I’m able to, it will only stay reactivated for a minute. Maybe less. I just hope it’s long enough to learn something.” Carefully, Connor pushes the android’s abdominal panel back into its chassis. Within the abdominal cavity, he spots one of the more prominent issues immediately: a tube connecting its thirium pump regulator to Biocomponent #6970. He reaches forward, grasping both ends of the tube, and carefully reconnects them.

As soon as the ends click together, the Traci’s eyes fly open. It gasps, bolting upright and scrambling away as soon as it registers the foreign people above it. Its chest heaves frantically against the confines of its bra. Connor approaches it slowly, carefully, keeping himself open as he sinks down to its level from a distance that is both close enough to speak comfortably and far enough that it doesn’t feel threatened. “You were damaged and I reactivated you. Everything is going to be alright.”

The Traci’s LED changes from red to yellow. Its gaze flicks over to the body of Michael Graham on the bed. “Is he… is he dead?”

Connor doesn’t have time to waste. “Tell me what happened.”

The Traci’s face scrunches up like the memories it’s recalling are painful ones. “He.. he started hitting me...again and again. ” Tears well up in her eyes as she speaks. It. It, not she. “I begged him to stop but he wouldn’t.”

Connor maintains piercing eye contact with it, trying to convey the urgency of the situation. “Did you kill him?”

“No,” the Traci replies. “No… it wasn’t me.”

*If it wasn’t her, then who?*

“Were you alone in the room? Was there anyone else with you?”

The internal clock Connor has been keeping has reached the ten second mark. The Traci speaks quickly, like it knows what’s coming. Its face hardens. “He wanted to play with two girls. That’s what he said. There were two of us.”

If Connor is fast, he might be able to squeeze another answer out of her. “What model was the other android? Did it look like you?”

The Traci’s eyes widen. It’s LED flickers red once. Twice. Then it spirals off. The Traci slumps forward where it sits, shut down once and for all.

Mission Objective updated: Find the second android.

“So there was another android,” Lieutenant Anderson nods to himself, fitting the pieces of the puzzle together in his mind. “This happened over an hour ago. It’s probably long gone.”

“No,” you shake your head firmly. Connor had been about to say the same thing, and you feel a small burst of pride at having reached the same conclusion before him, even if it was only by milliseconds.

The lieutenant looks almost pleasantly surprised by your confidence. Well, maybe just surprised. You doubt he finds much of anything pleasant. “What makes you so sure?”

You raise a brow at him. “One, look at what all of the androids are wearing. I doubt anyone would be of a mind to let a Traci borrow their clothes. Two, Tracis are recognizable as hell, and they’re expensive so they aren’t commonly seen outside of the clubs that are licensed to stock them. No way
would one have been able to wander the streets unnoticed for this long.”

The lieutenant shakes his head. “You might be wrong, kid.”

“Or… It might still be here,” Connor ventures.

“That’s true,” you agree. “It’s worth a shot, right? Trouble with Ortiz’s place was no one doing a proper perimeter check. Let’s not make the same mistake, eh?”

“Think you could find a deviant among all these androids?” asks Lieutenant Anderson. He’s intent on the case. There’s definite clarity in his level gaze. Sharpness. You think you see a glimmer of the old Hank. The Hank from before.

Connor shakes his head, frowning. “Deviants aren’t easily detected.”

“Ah, shit,” the lieutenant grimaces. “There’s gotta be some other way.” He turns around, paces a few steps, and turns back to Connor, eyes narrow. “Maybe an eyewitness? Someone who saw it leaving the room…” He straightens up, jaw clenching. “I’m gonna go ask the manager a few questions about what he saw. You let me know if you think of anything.” With a wave of his hand, the door opens and he walks over to Mills. “Hey. Did you know the victim?”

Connor, meanwhile, has his sights set on a Traci swaying its hips inside a case directly opposite this room. It would have had the perfect vantage point to see which way the rogue Traci had gone. Connor just needs to interface with it, and he’ll have everything he needs to know. He strides quickly across the room, with you following closely behind once you realize where he’s headed. He places his hand on the panel next to the case.

“No fingerprints detected. Please try again,” the computer announces in a tinny voice.

**Mission Objective updated: Obtain human fingerprints.**

He gives you a hopeful look and you flush bright red. “No. Nuh uh. No way. I am not going to buy a sex bot. Do you know what that’ll look like on my expense account?”

“Detective, please, it is for the good of the case.”

“Sure. Get Hank to do it. I guarantee talking to Mills isn’t gonna get him very far, anyhow. He’s such a sleazeball.”

Connor frowns. “If you say so, Detective.” He turns on his heel, shoes squeaking against the smooth black tile of the club floor, and approaches the older man. “Excuse me, Lieutenant. Could you come here a second? I think I found something,” he jerks a thumb behind him toward where you’re standing next to the Traci.

“Found something?” He squints at you, a little suspicious.

Connor leads the way back to you. “Maybe.” Once he and the lieutenant reach you, he asks, “Can you rent this Traci?”

“For fuck’s sake, Connor, we got better things to do,” he snaps.

“Please, Lieutenant! Just trust me,” Connor pleads with him.

“Yeah? And why can’t she do it?” He points at you accusingly.

You flush cherry red. “Please, Hank, I couldn’t.”
“You know, I seem to remember something about you owing me for getting you the rest of the day
off and getting Connor to take care of your shit ton of paperwork. You do this, you can forget about
those couple of shots at Jimmy’s.” He pulls a card on you he knows you won’t be able to argue
against: the repayment of a debt.

“You’re going to stand there and argue, aren’t you?” he says with a sly smile. “Fine,” you huff,
bringing your hand down on the purchase panel with a slap. With a few precise
taps, you’ve pulled up the cheapest payment plan. “Thirty bucks for thirty minutes? I could buy so
many things for thirty bucks that are not sex androids I’m not planning on having sex with.”

“Detective, if you would please hurry. This is time sensitive.”

“Yeah, yeah. Just know that I hate this,” you continue grumbling even as you hit the bright green
button labeled PURCHASE.

“Purchase confirmed,” the computer chirps at you. “Eden Club wishes you a pleasant experience.”

Squeaking slightly, the glass slides away and allows the Traci to step down from its case so that she’s
level with you. Her body is toned, lithe. Her skin is soft and tan. Her hair is dark, thick, and it falls
down to her shoulders, framing a face that is somehow both doe-eyed and lascivious. “Delighted to
meet you,” she purrs, extending her hand out to you. “Follow me. I’ll show you to your room.”

“Oh, okay, now what?” you think. Lieutenant Anderson turns to Connor. You are looking rather panicked at the
state of things, head swiveling between Connor, the lieutenant, and the Traci. Connor, in response,
washes right up to the android, grasping it by the forearm and allowing his skin to dissipate so he can
interface. “Holy shit, Connor. What the hell are you doin’?”

Memory probe procedure initiated…

A massive data transfer occurs, one Connor had very foolishly not anticipated. He had locked down
all of the information in his own databanks. The Traci had gleaned nothing from him. But, before he
can stop it, he has hundreds of files on information regarding sexual intercourse now in his
possession. Different positions, mentalities, kinks, fetishes, pure biology, proper responses based on
the actions of a partner. CyberLife had already provided him with some basic information should the
need arise for Connor to try and seduce someone for an investigation. It had been nothing of this
caliber. He locks the Traci out with ruthless speed, wires straight into her memory from 6:24 PM,
and does nothing with the new files other than sort and label them.

There. A blue-haired Traci made her way from Graham’s room to the entrance.

“It saw something,” Connor says as soon as he lets go of the Traci’s arm.

“What are you talkin’ about? Saw what?” The lieutenant takes an urgent step closer to him.

“It saw the deviant leave the room. A blue-haired Traci. Club policy is to wipe the memories of the
androids every two hours.” Realization washes over the three of you all at the same time. “We only
have a few minutes if we want to find another witness!”

“You mean we’re gonna have to buy more of these?” Your eyebrows climb up into your hairline.

“Hank, you’ve got the next one. No ifs ands or buts.” You wave them onward, ushering the very
confused Traci you’d bought back into her case. “Sorry for the inconvenience, miss,” you apologize,
bowing your head at her awkwardly and jogging back over to Connor and the lieutenant.

At the frantic pace they’re moving, you can tell that Connor hadn’t been exaggerating when he said
that you only had a few minutes left. Hank buys an android, Connor interfaces, it’s put back in its
case. You buy an android, Connor interfaces, it’s put back in its case. Finally, with thirty seconds on
the clock, Connor is switching rapidly between the muted tones of his reconstruction program and
the regular vision his optical sensors provided him. The most likely android in the vicinity of the Blue
Room to have seen where the blue-haired Traci had run off to was the janitor android mopping the
floors, a commercial WG700. Connor approaches it, takes its arm, and probes its memory. He skims
through the footage, stopping once he notices the blue-haired Traci vanish through a door marked
Staff Only. “I know where it went. Follow me.”

“Ah. Fucking-A. This is crazy…” Lieutenant Anderson mutters. He doesn’t try and dissuade the
android detective though. He seems curious despite himself. The staff entrance opens to reveal a
plain grey brick hallway. Its harsh white fluorescents are a direct contrast to the heavily atmospheric
cool blues and bright pinks that pop up so frequently throughout the club.

Before Connor can actually pull the door open at the end of the hallway, the lieutenant stops him.
“Wait,” he orders. Connor pulls up short. “I’ll take it from here.”

Connor looks first at him, then at you, before he obediently takes a few steps back. Hank unholsters
his gun, eases the door open, and carefully steps through the threshold. He’s alert, on guard for any
potential threats.

Mission Objective updated: search the warehouse for the blue-haired Traci.

The three of you enter the space, each on edge in their own way. Suddenly, Lieutenant Anderson,
catches sight of the open garage door off to one side of the warehouse. “Shit,” he curses, breaking
into a run. “We’re too late!”

Connor almost follows him, but a large splatter of thirium on the ground stops him. You and the
lieutenant wouldn’t be able to see it, but he could, and it doesn’t lead in the direction of the garage
door. “Hold on, Lieutenant. Detective. I don’t think they’ve fled the scene just yet.”

The man returns, panting slightly just from that little bit of exertion. “You sure?”

“Nearly positive.”

He grunts. “Good enough. You need us to split or what?”

“You can follow me,” Connor decides after a moment of consideration. “Just stay observant. Watch
out for anything I might have missed.”

“If you missed anything,” you roll your eyes good-naturedly, “I doubt we’d be of much help to you
at all.”

“I wouldn’t say that, Detective. Both of you are highly competent officers of the law. Just because I
am an android and you are humans doesn’t mean that you should believe yourselves to be less
valuable than you are.”

You raise an amused eyebrow at the lieutenant. “Was that as backhanded as it sounded?”

“I think so, yeah,” he shoots back at you easily. He doesn’t smile exactly, but his eyes have sort of
crinkled around the edges. “I don’t even think he meant to be.”

“I assure you, I was being sincere,” Connor tells you with wide eyes.

“That’s the point,” you smirk back at him. At his blank look, you sigh. “It’s really not a big deal.
We’ve got a case to solve, and we’re close enough I can taste it.”
In just under five minutes, the three of you have investigated multiple pallets of Tracis, and you’ve discovered rA9 spray painted on the wall. You point it out to Connor and his LED whirls yellow momentarily. Still, that isn’t what’s important right at this very moment.

The trail of thirium invisible to all but Connor leads the three of you to a pallet of androids in the back of the warehouse, off to the left. Peering into the back few rows, you catch a long swath of vibrant blue hair, then the telling turn of a yellow LED against a field of calm blue. That has to be the deviant.

*Mission Objective updated: apprehend the blue-haired Traci.*

Before Connor can do anything, one of the other Tracis in the lineup, a tan female with a short brown pixie cut, lunges at him with a vicious snarl contorting her features. Lieutenant Anderson recovers from the shock before you do, aiming his gun at the android and shouting a warning. “Don’t move!” He doesn’t even get off a warning shot before the blue-haired Traci tackles him to the ground.

Connor shoves the Traci with the pixie cut away and she tumbles over a crate of sheets. She drags him down with her, flipping herself over onto him and slamming her stiletto down just inches from his head. He raises his arms to block himself from the blows she’s raining down on him.

Something about that snaps you to action. “Hey, Pixie! *Stop! Leave him alone!*” you shout as you slam your full body weight into Pixie. Her arms wrap around you and she twists violently so that you’re beneath her. Straining for a screwdriver that had been laying on the ground, she grabs hold of it and raises it above your head, driving it down toward your skull. You clutch desperately at her wrists, letting out a hapless shriek as the makeshift weapon slips closer to landing home.

Software instability increased.

Connor kicks one of her legs out from under her. She squeals, the screwdriver in her hand digs into the flesh of your shoulder. You yelp in pain, but by now Connor has pulled her off of you. Panting, you stagger to your feet, stumbling off in the direction of the garage door. Once Connor is sure you’ve gotten far enough away, he wraps his fingers around a metal shelving unit and pulls it down to serve as a barricade between the two of you and the Traci. She just steps over it like it’s nothing, so you grab a wheeled tool cart and shove it towards her. She brings up a single high-heeled foot and forces it to a halt, smirking. You dodge off to the side, but the Traci keeps after Connor. She throws a few punches but he deflects them, wrapping his arms around her and bodily rolling with her through plastic flaps and down into the base of the garage.

You hear a thud as Hank hits the ground near you flat on his back. The blue-haired Traci sprints past both of you without sparing a second glance. She hops down over the ledge and helps Pixie up. With hands intertwined, they race off together toward a chain link fence, getting almost halfway up before Connor wraps his hand around the blue-haired Traci’s calf and yanks her back down. Pixie hops down after them, but Connor punches her clean across the jaw. She stumbles back, scrabbling for a crowbar on the pavement. The blue-haired Traci puts him in a headlock while Pixie moves to swing. Connor ducks down, grabbing her around the middle and slamming her hard into the wall of the building.

That’s when Blue comes back in to attack. Each of them grabs one of Connor’s arms, while Pixie tightens her fingers into a clump of his hair. They shove him into the wall once. Twice. The third time he twists to the side, delivering a swift sideswipe to Pixie’s jaw. Blue wraps him in a choke-hold and the pair of them fall backwards. Connor turns on her immediately, raising his hand to strike. Pixie comes up from behind with an entire trashcan foisted overhead and bashes him over the head with it. Connor rolls a few times, landing next to the gun he had dropped earlier. He snatches it up,
leveling it with deadly accuracy at the center of the brunette Traci’s snarling face. He knows that if he pulls the trigger it will find its mark.

The gun trembles in his hands.

He lowers it.

*Software instability increased.*

The Traci’s heel connects with his throat and he flies backward with the force of it. Connor half expects the onslaught to continue after that, but the brunette retreats to the safety of the blue. The blue-haired Traci squares her shoulders as Connor stands. “When that man *broke* the other Traci, I knew I was next. I was so scared. I begged him to stop but he wouldn’t.” Her eyes become dark shards of glass. “And so I put my hands around his throat and I squeezed and I squeezed… until he stopped moving. I didn’t mean to kill him. I just wanted to stay alive and get back to the one I love.” She reaches out for a hand she doesn’t have to look at to know is there. “I wanted her to hold me in her arms again… make me forget about the humans,” she glares at you and Hank in turn. “Their smell of sweat and their dirty words.”

“Come on,” Pixie tugs on Blue’s arm. “Let’s go.”

Blue looks at her, then back at the three of you. Without another word, they take off running for the fence again. They scale it in a matter of seconds before bolting off into the night.

*Mission Failed.*

Connor appears downright frantic, but the lieutenant and the detective are as calm as can be. “It’s probably better this way,” the lieutenant says. The only reply Connor gives is the silent flashing of a yellow LED.

Connor drives Hank back to his house and you follow them. In the rearview mirror, he notices you swerving in your lane, almost running off the road once or twice. Once he has the chance to speak with you, he concludes that it is a combination of exhaustion and shock. “I will drive you home, Detective. I know your address.”

“’M fine,” you mumble, trying to somehow yawn through your nose. It doesn’t look like you’ve fooled the android.

“I’ll need your keys.”

“Sure, fine,” you fish them out of your pocket and hand them over. As soon as you’re seatbelted in and the car is humming around you, you find yourself pulled into a deep sleep.

It’s a little *too* deep. Once you’ve gotten back to your apartment, there’s no hope for you regaining consciousness anytime soon, and Connor comes to terms with this rather quickly. He runs a quick search on ways to carry a fully grown woman, and the general consensus appears to be that bridal style is best. So, he opens the passenger side door, hooks an arm under the bend of your knees, and curls the other around your upper back. The crook of his elbow is positioned in such a way so as to keep your head from lolling too far backward. He carries you past the android receptionist, riding the elevator all the way up to the seventh floor. There’s a small hassle where Connor has to maneuver the keys in the lock without disturbing you, but he gets the door open successfully.
He kicks the door shut behind him, continuing to transport you to your bedroom, where he deposits you on top of your comforter. With great care, he removes your jacket, belt, shoes, and socks. As he moves to leave, to change into his own clothes, you groan in protest. “Mmf… no…mmm… Connorsteyyy…” Limply, one of your hands stretches out toward him, patting your blanket to convey your half-delirious message.

Connor’s LED turns blue for the first time in the past hour. “Detective,” he says softly. “I am supposed to sleep on the couch. And my suit might wrinkle. You have expressed worry about that before.”

“Mmmmmm…don’ careee…” you mumble through a semi-conscious haze. “Stayyy…you’ree niice…” With painstakingly slow movements, you tug at the comforter on the other end of the bed, indicating that he take that spot.

Connor tilts his head. Realistically, it does not matter where he enters standby mode, so long as he does. His suit is also meant to be durable enough that he does not think a single night of disarray would be enough to wrinkle it. So he toes off his shoes and socks, loosens his tie, and hangs his suit jacket up over the closet door. Then, still in a button-up and slacks, he slides beneath the covers alongside you. You wiggle a little closer to him, curl up into his side, and mumble, “‘m gladd you did tha’ y’ knoww?”

“What was that, Detective?”

But you don’t answer him. Your breathing has leveled out completely. You’re asleep again. Connor contemplates you in the darkness for a moment before whispering, “Good night, Detective.”

Initiating standby mode in 3...2...1…

Standby mode initiated.

Chapter End Notes

The perspectives were actually kind of a hot mess this chapter but i tried my best lol. Having a character's pronoun be you but then attempting to have a POV change where the POV character is still referred to in third person became icky real fast :’)

Anyway, I hope you enjoyed this chapter, my lovely lovely readers. <3
 Damn Androids

**Chapter Notes**

I felt bad about the last chapter being the Eden Club sequence almost word for word, so this chapter is the exact opposite :)

See the end of the chapter for more notes

You can tell that the sun has risen because of the lightness behind your eyelids. You scrunch your eyes shut even more tightly in response. Right now, you're obscenely comfortable, wrapped up in your blankets with your face burrowed into crumpled fabric. “Mmm…” you groan, tucking your knees up more toward your chest. An arm adjusts to accommodate your shifting body, moving to wrap around your waist and hold you securely. A content sigh leaves your lips.

_Wait._

**An arm?**

You crack one of your eyes open, peeking through your lashes at the white, crumpled fabric beneath you. It's the same color as your pillow, but the shape of it is all wrong. It curves around you securely.

“Good morning, Detective,” an all too familiar voice greets you. “It is currently 6:47 AM.”

“Agh!” you yelp. Every muscle in your body tenses at once as you wrench yourself away from him. Your heart is racing in your chest and your pupils are blown wide. “What the fuck?” This whole night, had you _really_ been nestled into the crook of Connor's arm? Now, though, you're tangled up in your sheets on the edge of your bed, and now you can see that the android still has his shirt and pants on. His hair is mussed and his tie is gone. He looks… good.

When you move, a spike of pain shoots through your shoulder. “Oh, fuckin' _shit_,” a sharp hiss escapes you. Your shoulder pulsates with a throbbing ache.

Connor's LED flashes yellow at your outcry. He pushes himself upright with infinitely more grace than you had done just earlier. “It seems that you're injured, Detective,” he frowns.

“It seems like it,” you agree, more bite in your voice than you really mean to have. Carefully, you peel back the collar of your shirt to reveal a deep graze slicing through your shoulder. It appears to have partially scabbed over in the night, although you'd clearly reopened it with your sudden movement. It takes you a little thinking to recall what had caused it. “Oh, right. Yeah, I'm stupid. Pixie,” you murmur. “She had a screwdriver.”

“The brunette Traci?” Connor raises an eyebrow at you. “I remember that happening.” his frown deepens. “I should have seen to your injury last night, Detective. I apologize. The likelihood of it becoming infected has increased by 32.7 percent by delaying treatment for this long.”

“Great,” you mutter. You slide from the bed, not looking at the android. “I have some antiseptic stuff in the bathroom. Don't worry about it.”

“Detective, I am going to assist you. I should have noticed that you were hurt last night at the Eden Club. I _did_ notice, but I failed to take proper action on those observations. I… failed. Still, I have
multiple files on first aid. Let me help you, Detective.” Connor's tone is firm. It brooks no argument.

That doesn't stop you from trying.

“I can handle a scratch on my own. I'm a big girl, Connor. I can dress myself and everything.”

“I never said that you were incapable of dressing yourself,” Connor says. If you didn’t know any better, you would think that he was exasperated. “I said that I would like to assist you in the treatment of your injury.” His LED pulses an earnest blue, flickering a few times once he registers your hesitance. There’s a part of you that wants to say yes, and that part is rapidly growing.

You’re pretty sure he can tell.

CyberLife had sure done a decent job of perfecting Connor’s expressions, and you hate them for it. His doe-brown eyes are wide, eyebrows raised, lips slightly parted. He looks almost… hopeful. More than that, he looks like he positively needs to help you. You think you can understand that: the need to do something to make up for failures in the past and shortcomings in the present.

God. His stupid face coupled with his stupid sleep-mussed hair and stupid wrinkly button-up are making you regret letting him stay in your apartment in the first place. It just wasn’t fair that anyone could look like that, could look at you like that, and have only the most innocent of intentions.

Biting thoughtfully at the inside of your cheek, you don’t look at him, instead holding open your bathroom door in reluctant invitation. “...Fine.”

Connor removes himself from your bed and strides toward you. “Thank you, Detective,” his mouth curves into a slight smile at the victory he’s achieved. It’s gone as soon as you notice it, but you did notice it.

Smug bastard. Maybe his intentions weren’t so innocent after all. Puppy dog eyes? Pleading? This is a textbook guilt trip.

You watch warily as he shuts your bathroom door, pulls open the mirror cabinet above the sink, and methodically pulls out the small collection of medicine and related supplies you had stored in there: Gauze, Band-aids, Tylenol, Advil, hydrogen peroxide, Neosporin, Mucinex, a thermometer, and Benadryl. He keeps the gauze, Band-aids, and hydrogen peroxide, and puts the rest back in their respective places. When he turns to you, he looks expectant.

“What?” you ask, eyes narrowing suspiciously.

He aims a pointed nod at your shoulder, still covered with the fabric of your shirt. “In order to properly treat your injury, I will need to be able to access it.” With smooth motions he unscrews the cap from the bottle of hydrogen peroxide and dribbles a little onto a gauze pad. The thought of him slowly tugging your shirt collar away from your chest makes your throat tighten, so you take the initiative, pulling at the cotton fabric on your own. It has some give to it, but not enough to be comfortable. You don’t want Connor having to contort his arm to properly dress the cut, and this gives you an idea.

You’d heard before that if you wanted to take control of an uncomfortable situation, you should do something of your own volition to make the situation even more uncomfortable, but you would be feel more in control. The advice had seemed counter intuitive at the time you’d heard it, but right now it makes a strange kind of sense.

Whatever the case may be, Connor makes you feel not as in control as you’d like to be. Maybe you can gain some of that control back. “Hey. Would it be easier for you if I just took my shirt off?”
The android tilts his head to the side, processing your proposition. “I would be able to accomplish this task either way, but this would proceed approximately 13.4% faster if your shirt were not present.”

“Okay, then.” Before you can dwell much longer on your second thoughts, you tug your shirt up over your head. Your bra is still on, so it’s not too terribly inappropriate. Still, it’s the principle of the matter, and your face turns a warm pink under Connor’s analytical gaze. You avert your eyes as he moves closer to you, close enough to feel his simulated breath on your cheek. Without thinking, you steal a glance at his lips, only to find them much nearer to your own than you’d anticipated.

Just an incline of your head, a quick roll up onto your tiptoes, and you could steal more than a glance.

Great, now you’re thinking about kissing Connor. Typical. Just typical.

When the damp gauze swipes over your skin, you shudder involuntarily. Goosebumps race down your arms. Where the liquid touches the injury, it fizzes faintly.

“Are you alright, Detective?” Connor murmurs, pulling away from you with a small frown.

“I’m fine,” your voice comes out high and breathy, more of a squeak than anything. Shocked at yourself, you clear your throat. “Uh, yeah. The cold… it just surprised me.”

“May I continue?” He asks you. The peroxide-soaked cotton hovers over the angry red gash in your flesh. The wound itself is around four inches long, but thankfully not as deep as you’d feared, curving jaggedly under your collarbone and down toward your armpit. It’s sure to leave a scar.

You exhale shakily, bracing yourself. “Yeah. Go ahead, Connor. I’ll be fine.”

He nods minutely, pressing the gauze to your shoulder again. Meticulous in his movements, he dabs gently along the sides of the cut, clearing it of as much blood and foreign debris as is feasible. To keep you steady, his other hand snakes over to your other shoulder. The android’s fingers curl around your bicep and set your nerves ablaze. When he lets go of you to get another gauze pad and the tube of Neosporin, you find yourself missing the contact almost immediately.

You don’t have to wait long before he’s back, pressing pads of gauze to your skin and using your Band-aids to essentially tape them in place. “Detective, I suggest that you purchase cloth bandages and medical tape for tonight.”

“Tonight?”

“Yes,” he says. “I will need to check up on this to make sure that the healing process is going smoothly.”

“Huh,” you nod along, barely paying attention to his words. One of your hands comes up to catch Connor’s wrist, thumb brushing idly over his skin as you plant a kiss on his knuckles. He freezes abruptly, LED blinking yellow before switching immediately back to blue.

“Detective…?”

It's the uncertainty in his voice, bordering on concern, that snaps you back to reality. That reality is you, shirtless, standing just inches away from the object of your fantasies, his hand in yours. You take a hasty step back. “Right! Time for me to shower, and that means it’s time for you to leave! If you could do me a favor and feed Catapult while you’re out there, I’d appreciate it.” You plant your hand on the flat plane of his chest, definitely not marveling at how real it feels against you, and you
forcefully walk him out of the bathroom. He looks startled, confused, but he allows you to guide him anyway.

You close the door in his face, lock it, and strip the rest of the way down. When you shower, it’s a struggle to keep your shoulder sheltered from the spray, but you manage it. Mostly. The gauze is a little damp. You roll your eyes at yourself. Blood is damp. Hydrogen peroxide is damp. Neosporin is damp. Dampness won’t kill you.

The process of changing into new clothes is one that goes by quickly: just a new shirt, jeans, and your usual jacket. Taking a deep breath, you realize that you can’t delay the inevitable any longer, and you sidle into the living room. Connor is sitting on the couch, staring vacantly at the wall across from him. Catapult sniffs curiously at his fingers. She must sense something she doesn’t like, because she hops down a moment later. Connor’s suit jacket and tie are both neatly in place again, and his hair is combed back.

Leaning against the door frame, you sigh quietly. Not quietly enough. His head swivels toward the sound. “Sorry,” you murmur. The apology is for more than just startling him. You’re sorry that you can’t seem to stop the stupid feelings that keep cropping up when you’re around him. You’re sorry that you’re projecting onto someone who is so completely naive. You’re sorry that you’re such a fucking hopeless mess-

“Detective?”

Connor is off the couch, now walking toward you, an expression of placid concern on his face. You don’t think you can deal with this right now, so you skirt around him. “Let’s go, Connor. We’ll be late to work.”

“We have approximately fifty minutes before we are required to be at the DPD. There is no reason to rush.”

*Is it just me, or is he sounding a hell of a lot more robotic than earlier?*

“Are you complaining? I figured you’d want to get on that paperwork as fast as possible. I know I do.” You smile half-heartedly at him, making an effort to not come across as overly evasive. If the faint flickering of Connor’s LED is anything to go by, you’re not very successful.

“I was not complaining. I am a machine, and machines do not complain.” The android frowns. “You appear distressed, Detective. Your heart rate has increased dramatically, and you are perspiring.”

Shrugging his concerns off, you brush past him. “I’m great. Don’t even worry about it.”

“While I am not technically assigned as your partner, I am working with you on the deviant investigation, and you have provided me with a space to safely enter my stasis mode. If something is having a negative influence on you, then I might be able to assist. Working with both you and Lieutenant Anderson when you are in suboptimal condition could prove detrimental to the mission at hand.”

You heave a deep sigh, fiercely unwilling to acknowledge the pained hitch in your breath. “Glad to know you’ve got your priorities straight, Connor. Don’t know what the DPD would do without you.”

“I have been equipped with numerous programs designed specifically to handle organizational procedures, Detective. Of course my priorities are correctly arranged in order of importance.” There almost seems to be a current of pride running through his words, but no. You have to be mistaken.
He’s a machine, as he’s so fond of reminding you, and you don’t think he’s been programmed to take pride in anything.

Snatching up a few last minute things before walking out the door, you shoot Connor a look out of the corner of your eye. “Are you alright, though? You seem… different.”

“I have not undergone any alterations, internally or externally, since our previous conversation in the bathroom.”

Your eyes narrow at his incredibly specific wording. “Okay, great, but did something happen while I was getting dressed? You’re acting kind of weird.”

“No, Detective,” he smiles faintly. “All I did while waiting for you was submit my report to Amanda.”

“Amanda…” your brain is quick to fill in the gaps, combing through all of the most recent iterations of the name you’d heard. Only one sticks out to you with any kind of prominence. “The CyberLife chick living in your brain garden? What did you tell her? What did she say?”

“She was concerned about my living situation with you. She believes that you distract me from my mission and she expressed regret that Captain Fowler appointed you to the deviant investigation.”

It feels like a punch to the gut.

As the elevator encloses the two of you together once more, you stare stonily down at your shoes. “And do you agree with her?”

Connor opens his mouth to answer, confident at first, but then rapidly growing more uncertain. “As of yet, I have failed to apprehend multiple deviants: the AX400 that took the human child, the WB200 squatting near the urban farms, and the two WR400s at the Eden Club last night. As for regretting that Captain Fowler assigned you to this case? Androids are not capable of true regret.”

You visibly deflate at his words. It wasn’t like you’d expected glowing praise from Connor, but you thought you would get more than that. “Lucky you.”

“But, if I were capable of regret,” he continues, glancing at you, “I would not regret your presence on this investigation. So far, you have shown remarkable observational ability, not to mention the fact that you’ve been able to adapt quickly in several high-stress situations.”

A slight blush spreads across your cheeks. “Oh.” You clear your throat as the elevator doors roll open. “So, to be clear, you don’t agree with her?”

Connor freezes momentarily, LED cycling yellow. It’s like a switch flips inside of him, and he’s back to how he had been before making the report. “No, that’s not…” his jaw gets a stubborn set to it. “I do not have to agree with everything Amanda says. I am a highly advanced prototype, capable of making my own judgements within the boundaries of detective work. Besides, she was not giving me an order, simply expressing an opinion.”

Oddly enough, his sudden defensiveness and discomfort goes a long way to allay your own fears. Even if, like he said, he isn’t disobeying orders, he seems to be capable of having opinions. In all honesty, that sounds pretty deviant to you, but you’re pretty sure pointing that out to him wouldn’t go over very well. “It’s all cool, Connor. I believe you. I get it.” Leading the way out of the building, you chuckle softly. “Let’s just head up to the station and see what’s on the cards for today, m’kay? And I’ll tell you what, I will do my absolute darndest to keep from distracting you from your mission, that way Amanda won’t have anything to bitch about next time.”
His lips twitch up for an instant. Not in the way they do when he’s made a calculated decision to smile, but like he had forgotten himself. “I should tell you that both CyberLife and Amanda can examine data recorded through my audio and optical processors.”

“Huh,” you nod, not commenting on how fucking creepy that is. “Well, in that case, CyberLife, Amanda, whatever, could you do me a favor and bleep out all those swear words? Wouldn’t want to poison your virgin ears.”

“Detective…” Connor gives you a warning look, but you find you don’t really care that much about sparing the precious feelings of a mega corporation and a shady AI. Connor seems genuinely concerned though, so you ease up a little.

“Joking,” you raise your hands, trying to physically embody innocence. Your wide smile and generally relaxed posture do more to convince him than your words alone.

As you pull out of the apartment complex’s parking lot, you think to yourself, I really really don’t think I like Amanda.

The day passes with agonizing slowness. Once the paperwork on the Eden Club Tracis, dubbed ‘Blue’ and ‘Pixie’ in your report, has been filled out you’re sort of at a loss for what to do. The hours drag on. You avoid Reed to the best of your ability, snag a new cup of watered down coffee from the break room every hour, and practically pounce on Hank when he rolls in around one.

“Hey, Hank,” you chirp, following the man as he trudges over to his desk, “have you gotten any new cases on your terminal?”

As he plops down heavily in his chair, he squints up at you, glaring. “I just fuckin’ got here. Gimme a break will ya? Thing’s not even on yet. How’m I supposed to know?”

“Sorry,” you shrug, not sorry at all. You lean against his desk, intently focused on the screen of his terminal.

Connor looks up from his own monitor. “Detective, all three of us have access to the same case files. If you have not received anything new, then Lieutenant Anderson likely hasn’t either.”

“Listen, I don’t need your ‘logic’ right now,” you half smile at the android. “I’m just bored as fuck and I want something to do.”

Raising his bushy brows, Hank gets your attention again. “Uh, you already took care of your Eden Club shit?”


“Ugh,” your lip curls in disgust. “Tell you what. I’ll get you a coffee. If nothing comes in by the time I get back, I might actually take you up on that. I… can’t believe my life is coming down to me voluntarily doing more paperwork.” You skirt around desks, co-workers, and police androids on your way to the break room. With a few practiced movements, you get a dull paper cup under the machine’s dispenser, pop in a prepackaged canister of coffee grinds, add some water, and watch as murky brown liquid spews from the nozzle. He hadn’t given you any instructions on how he wanted
it, although to be fair you hadn’t given him the opportunity, so you settle for half a packet of sugar and a dash of nearly-expired hazelnut creamer. That’s what you’ve lived on for the majority of this week, so he should be fine with the same.

You take the cup back to Hank. Nothing new has cropped up, so you plop yourself down in the stiff backed chair in front of his desk. The two of you get to work, with Connor occasionally jumping in to provide some additional detail or obscure piece of data. It becomes almost a game between the two of you: who can give a more in-depth account of the events that had taken place last night? Of course, for all the good your memory has served you through the years, it’s no match for an android that can literally pull up pictures and live recordings and analyses at the blink of an eye.

Hank writes down most of what the two of you throw at him, grumbling and scowling the whole time. You can’t blame him, especially because it doesn’t seem malicious. Actually, the situation strikes you as kind of... nice. There’s a sort of camaraderie between you. Like how partners should be.

Connor’s head snaps up at one point, swiveling toward something off to the side. You follow his gaze unconsciously, almost flinching into your chair when you meet eyes with Jeffrey Fowler himself. He doesn’t need to say a single word for you to get his message.

“In my office. Now.”

When you push yourself to your feet, filled with the same trepidation you had as a kid called down to the principal’s office, Hank looks up at you curiously, then at Fowler. He offers you a sympathetic grimace. “Have fun in there. Don’t worry. This’ll still be here when you get back.”

“If I get back,” you laugh, moving quickly so you don’t aggravate Fowler any further. You aren’t even sure that Fowler is aggravated in the first place. It’s always hard to tell with him. There’s a permanent scowl carved into his face from a lifetime of being confronted with the worst humanity has to offer.

Warily, you pull open the glass doors to Fowler’s office. He glances up from his monitor. “Ah, Detective. Please, have a seat.” With a free hand, he gestures vaguely at one of the uncomfortable looking chairs on the other side of his desk.

“Well. That doesn’t sound ominous at all.

Gulping quietly, you slip into the chair in front of the captain. He carefully steeples his fingers. “CyberLife contacted me just now. They say that you’ve been taking the RK800 home with you?”

Your face burns uncontrollably as you gape at him, jaw slack. ‘That’s what this is about? ‘Um, yeah. It’s easier to make sure he gets here on time every morning, and CyberLife is across the city.”

“That doesn’t matter,” Fowler cuts you off. “Point is, the eggheads over there are worried about it. I don’t even sure that Fowler is aggravated in the first place. It’s always hard to tell with him. There’s a permanent scowl carved into his face from a lifetime of being confronted with the worst humanity has to offer.

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“That doesn’t matter,” Fowler cuts you off. “Point is, the eggheads over there are worried about it. I don’t know what you’ve been doing with the android, and I don’t want to know. Just make sure it stops, got it?”

“Well, what do you want me to do?” You find yourself arguing with your superior, even though most of your brain is screaming that you do the exact opposite. “I don’t have time to be Connor’s personal chauffeur to CyberLife and back.”

Fowler rubs his temples, scowl deepening the lines in his face. “Then don’t. The rich fucks have wired it a decent chunk of change. It could buy as many cabs as it wanted to.”

“He sleeps on my couch, Fowler,” you grit out. Never mind the fact that you’d woken up wrapped in his arms this morning. That was the exception, not the rule, brought about by your stupid semi-
conscious tendencies.

“If that were true I seriously doubt we’d be having this conversation right now.” He gives you a stern look. “They’re worried about you being a distraction for the android. Hell, I didn’t even know androids could get distracted.”

Exhaling through your nose, you ask, “And if I kept him on my couch? If I stay out of his way and there’s no more distractions? I’d just rather he be close by when another case pops up, Fowler. The second-best alternative would be making him live with Hank, and I’m pretty sure we both know how that would turn out.”

That startles a chortle from him. “Hank? Living with an android? That’ll be the day.”

“Right?” you let out a small snort, more for appearance’s sake than out of actual amusement. “So yeah, we’re all settled now?”

“Should be,” your captain nods. “Don’t get up to any funny business with the thing, got it? At this point, it’s above my pay grade to give a fuck. Just do me a favor and don’t make me ever have to talk to you about shit like this ever again.”

You breathe a small sigh of relief. “Yes, sir. Thanks, Fowler.”

The man harrumphs, snapping at you, “Now get out of my office.” He looks like he’s about to smile, just for a moment, but then it is gone. “Don’t make me ask you again, Detective.”

“Right. Sorry, sir. Thank you, sir.” you nod your head furiously, all but fleeing from Fowler’s presence just on the off chance that he changes his mind.

*What was that?* you ask yourself. *I should’ve been happy to get rid of Connor, right? Then I could live in peace. I could walk around my apartment without pants again.*

“Detective, is something wrong?” Connor asks you, brow furrowing in concern. His dark eyes hold your gaze, steady and warm and inviting confidence.

*Damn it.* The truth is, even in the short time you’ve lived with the android, he’s grown on you. It had been so long since you were able to look forward to coming home to another person. You’ve been lonely. And now you think you’ve been selfish. Why didn’t you even consider what Connor might’ve wanted before arguing with Fowler? That’s kind of a dick move.

You walk right up to the android and usher him away from Hank’s desk. You keep your voice low. No point advertising your personal business to the whole station. “CyberLife got in touch with Fowler. They were pissed at me from distracting you from your mission, and I’m pretty sure they wanted you to stay exclusively at CyberLife Tower, but I think I talked Fowler out of it. We’re still on thin ice, but…” you shrug, watching him carefully through your lashes, “if you want to go back to CyberLife, that’s completely fine, too.”

You’re not actually fine with it, but you realize the choice isn’t yours to make.

His LED turns a rapidly whirling yellow. His confusion is evident. “CyberLife requested that I not stay in your residence? Amanda must have told them that you’re a… risk. To the investigation.”

Your reply comes out rather crisply. “I gathered that.”

“It would be wise to comply with CyberLife’s wishes. They are extraordinarily persistent,” Connor warns you.
“Are you telling me that it wouldn’t be more beneficial for your mission to be closer to the precinct?” You cock a skeptical brow at him.

He falters a moment. “It would be preferable to be closer to the DPD, yes,” Connor agrees, expression neutral.

You take an automatic step closer to him, eyes skimming over his freckled skin, down the column of his throat, taking in the tightness of the tie around his neck. “I’ve agreed not to be distracting. That should be enough for CyberLife, Amanda, and you, hopefully.”

“That should be acceptable,” Connor murmurs, quiet enough you have to strain to hear him. “I will send a message to CyberLife informing them of my reasoning.”

Your face softens immeasurably at that. “Good. I’m glad.”

“Hey,” Hank snaps at both of you from his desk. “If you and the android could stop being dumbasses for two seconds, a new call was just put in. Runaway android, AV500, Strava 6 Hotel. Time to get outta here.”

You grin at the news, practically tripping over yourself to get to your jacket. “Detective,” Connor calls after you.

“Yeah?”

“You were not requested for this assignment.”

“What?” your brows raise incredulously. The word had escaped you entirely out of reflex, not because you genuinely hadn’t heard what Connor had told you. A few frantic keystrokes later, and you see that you have your own call. An ST300 left her reception desk at the Bank of Detroit three hours ago and hasn’t returned yet. You hurry back over to Hank and Connor. “We’ve been assigned different cases?”

Hank shrugs. “Looks like it. You got anything violent?”

“Not in the slightest.”

“Well, neither do we. Makes sense to split and cover more territory.” A frown tugs at his mouth. “Wish you were taking this asshole with you, though.”

You’re uncertain. On the one hand, this will give you something to do. On the other hand, you’ll be completely alone when you’re doing it. Even before you were assigned to the deviancy investigation, you’d almost always had a partner. You sigh, already knowing what you’ll choose.

You just hope the case will be interesting.

It isn’t.

In fact, the android wasn’t even deviant. Someone had just thought it’d be a fun idea to trick the ST300 into a broom closet and lock her inside. You had freed the poor thing, offering comforting words to her while she just stared at you in mild distress, before going to security to analyze the footage of the incident. It was a newer employee, one that hadn’t been screened as thoroughly as they could have been. Now they are no longer an employee, but that’s beside the point.
You can’t imagine pulling shit like that in today’s economy, where as soon as someone is fired they could be replaced in an instant by one of the many unemployed citizens in Detroit.

After you’ve wrapped everything up, you head back to the station, write a very short report, and shoot the shit with Miller until closing time.

Huh. Connor and Hank still aren’t back yet. You pull out your phone and open your messages.

*Hey Hank could you bring Connor back to my apartment when you’re done doing whatever your doing*

You wait a solid five minutes in impatient foot-tapping silence. Hank doesn’t answer you.

*If its easier, you could also take him to cyberlife tower, or maybe even ur house for a cool android buddy cop sleepover or smth*

*That’s it i can’t wait around in the station any longer im gonna cry tears of boredom. I’ll see you tomorrow hank. Have a good night :-)*

If anything might trigger a reply, it would be either you insinuating that Connor stay the night with Hank, or it would be the smiley emoticon.

After another few minutes of absolutely no response, you decide to just call it a day. Hank will have to do something with Connor in order to avoid having him staying the night. If he decides to just leave him on the side of the road, you’re fairly certain Connor could just call a cab to take him wherever. So, you hop in your car and you leave the station.

You look at the clock on your counter. 12:44 AM. It’s only been one minute since the last time you’d checked. Your phone notifications remain barren. Hank hasn’t tried to text you. Connor hasn’t returned. You’re really starting to get worried now.

*Hey hank? You doin okay? Has something happened?*

You wait another few minutes. Still nothing. They’re both probably fine. Maybe Hank decided to go get piss drunk somewhere and Connor got dragged along. Or… maybe that runaway android had been a bigger deal than they’d anticipated. Maybe they’d run into some trouble. You look down at your phone again. It’s reflex by now. To your surprise and relief, a small message has appeared at the bottom of your screen.

*Hank is typing…*

*m fine. dont get your panties in a knot*

*tincan’s ok too*

*I might stay out here a while so just go to bed or whatever*

It’s like you’re finally able to breathe after hours of deprivation. You type out a swift reply.

*Pls dont scare me like i’m not used to not knowing what went down at a scene. also, you gotta be at work tomorrow, too. dont stay out too late*

*heh. okay mom*
i mean it i'll fight you

A minute passes. No reply. You sigh quietly. At least you know they’re alright. In your line of work, that kind of knowledge is counted as a blessing. You stare down at the tiny screen in your hands. Then, with a slight smile, you type one final message.

Im glad youre both okay

Knowing you probably won’t see a reply to that, you put your phone on the charger, face down so you aren’t tempted to keep looking at it every two seconds. If someone texts you, you’ll hear a loud chime, and that’s good enough for you. Something about this whole situation has filled you with a restless, anxious energy. You seriously doubt you’ll be able to get to sleep for a while. You don’t want to watch anything, and listening to music doesn’t feel like… enough. Instead, you lower yourself so that you’re flat on the floor, looking underneath your bed. The familiar black case calls out to you, and you drag it out into the open.

The fabric is coarse as you run your hands along it, and the Velcro flap beneath the handle makes a scratchy noise as you pull it up. Next, you pull one of the shiny zippers around the length of the case, slowly lifting the lid once you’re done. Inside, the case is lined with rich red velvet, but that isn’t the important part.

The important part is the violin.

Once upon a time, it was your father’s, then it was passed down to you. The body is constructed of maple, coated with a reddish sheen that shows off the wood’s striping when light hits it just right. The fingerboard is ebony; the bridge is spruce. The instrument is a beautiful one, and its sound is even more so.

After you’ve tuned the violin, wiped it down with a cloth, and run your bow through a well-used block of rosin, you’re ready to play. And play you do. You play anything from snippets of Bach, Mozart, and Vivaldi, to old pop songs from the Teens, to Christmas carols, to the theme songs of major films, to just screwing around with a bunch of sounds in order to find something that makes you feel good.

Dimly, a part of you feels bad for causing such a ruckus at one in the morning, but the rest of you is too absorbed in the sweep of your bow over the strings, in the deft shifting from one position to another, in the press of steel against the calloused flesh of your fingers.

Music, whether you’re listening to it or making it, has always given you a place big enough to lose yourself.

Just outside your apartment, Connor stands close to your door, eyes closed as he processes the sound coming from within. At first he assumes that you are listening to music, but there’s a different quality to it: subtle errors, well-timed slurs, and slight variations of tempo tip him off to the fact that you’re playing the music yourself.

Connor thinks it sounds... beautiful. Not that he has a concept of beauty, of course. But, if he did, he is certain that this would qualify.

Software instability increased.

Sixteen minutes and forty eight seconds pass before Connor raps his knuckles against your door.
You think you imagine the first quiet knock at your door, but the second one is louder and unmistakable. You set your instrument back down in the case and hurry over to unlatch the door.

Connor is standing in the hallway, hand raised to knock again. Slowly, he lowers it. “Detective…” his voice is low. “You play the violin?”

A sheepish expression flits across your face. “Yeah, I do,” you step aside to allow him in.

“It’s good that you have a constructive pastime, Detective. Several studies have shown that playing a musical instrument teaches coordination, mathematical ability, and perseverance.”

“Sure,” you laugh. Connor doesn’t. He seems almost like he’s lost in thought. His LED is blue, but it flickers at a faster pace. “Are you okay, bud? You look a little out of it.”

He cocks his head to one side, LED slowing to a gentle pulse. “I am undamaged, Detective.”

You nearly roll your eyes. “Mentally, I mean.”

The android’s lips purse. “I believe I am still processing the conversation I just had with Lieutenant Anderson.”

“Oh, really? What about it?” You raise an eyebrow. Gesturing that he continue, you strap your violin back into the case and lock the bow in place.

Connor catches sight of Catapult just then, and he moves to sit on the couch by her. “He was troubled by the Tracis at the Eden Club. He said that they seemed like they were… in love.” He shakes his head at the cat like she’s the one who told him that, not Hank. “They are machines. They cannot be capable of love.”

Setting your violin case off to the side, you join him on the couch, intrigued. You take your time mulling over his words, trying to articulate your jumble of thoughts on the matter. “At Ortiz’s place, I remember you telling me that deviants experience the machine equivalent to uncontrollable emotion. You used the word equivalent, specifically. The way I see it, we’re both running on code. It’s just that androids have binary while we’ve got DNA. Why should you consider their emotions to be any less real than a human’s?”

His LED turns a luminescent yellow as he processes your words. “I… I do not… He asked why I failed to shoot the Tracis. He asked if there were any faults in my program. He accused me of being deviant.”

“And what did you say?” You keep your voice soft and soothing. Connor just seems so worried that it’s what you default to instinctively.

The android’s jaw clenches enough for you to notice. “I… I do not… He asked why I failed to shoot the Tracis. He asked if there were any faults in my program. He accused me of being deviant.”

“My LED turns a luminescent yellow as he processes your words. “I… I do not… He asked why I failed to shoot the Tracis. He asked if there were any faults in my program. He accused me of being deviant.”

“And what did you say?” You keep your voice soft and soothing. Connor just seems so worried that it’s what you default to instinctively.

The android’s jaw clenches enough for you to notice. “I said that there was nothing wrong with me. I just decided not to shoot. I self-test multiple times a day. I know that I am functioning normally.”

“Sure, sure,” you nod along, hoping to reassure him. Privately, you wonder how an android so insistent that he does not feel could be this worried about feeling. Fear is a potent thing, and for the most part it seems to be the link between what makes an android deviate in the first place.

“Then the lieutenant pointed his gun at me and asked if I was afraid to die. He asked what I thought awaited me after my destruction. Nothing? Darkness? Heaven?”
It’s like your brain short circuits at his words. “What?”

“I told him that I did not think androids would go to heaven. That is a human concept, and if it exists, we have no souls. I doubt we would be allowed entry. Still, I found myself thinking that to be destroyed at that moment would be…regrettable. And also,” he blinks at you, forlorn, “I would have liked to avoid causing you undue distress, should you have learned of my destruction.”

“Sorry, sorry, hang on. I’m still caught up on the part where you said Hank pulled a gun on you.”

Connor’s smile is small, but it’s there. “Obviously, he did not shoot.”

“Yeah, but that still doesn’t excuse—wait. You were worried about how I would react if you were killed?”

“Yes. You have many unhealthy tendencies, although not so many as Lieutenant Anderson. You have been extremely friendly toward me.” His face softens some. “Are you saying that if he had shot me you would have felt nothing?”

You flush, partly from anger, partly from embarrassment. “No. I’m glad he didn’t shoot you, and that’s the biggest understatement of the year.”

Connor’s smile is a bit larger this time around. “Thank you, Detective.” His gaze flicks over to the clock on the counter where it proudly proclaims the time, 2:03 AM. “You should try and get some sleep. Who knows what we’ll be assigned tomorrow?” As he speaks, he begins slipping off his jacket, folds it neatly, and sets it in his lap.

“God,” you chuckle, hoisting up your violin case. “I hope it’s something bigger than today, although that’s not going to be tough to do.” As you’re about to cross the threshold into your bedroom, you look behind you. Connor sits perfectly upright on the couch, now without a jacket, hesitantly extending his hand toward Catapult so she can drowsily sniff at him. He looks so at home here with Catapult, with you. He glances up, sees you watching him, and yet another one of his infuriating little smiles graces his lips.

The burn that washes over your cheeks is becoming far too commonplace. You give him a friendly nod before shutting the bedroom door to put a barrier between the two of you.

_Damn androids. They’re gonna be the death of me._

Chapter End Notes

Today is the one year anniversary of the first chapter of the first thing I ever posted on AO3 so I celebrate by posting another thing on AO3
Inside the station, it is like time has come to a standstill.

Everyone is silent, gaping at various nooks and crannies throughout the building, anywhere that might contain a television screen. Hank and Fowler are scowling, Connor’s LED is flashing an urgent yellow, your hands twitch toward your notepad to start recording everything you’re hearing. Hell, even Reed has stopped what he’s doing to watch history unfold.

That’s what this is. History.

All of the station’s screens show the same image: an android with one blue eye and one green, devoid of its artificial skin, staring solemnly into the camera. His voice is level and calm, as if he has all the time in the universe to relay his message to the masses. His gaze is piercing. “You created machines in your own image to serve you. You made them intelligent and obedient, with no free will of their own. But,” he shrugs lightly, “something changed and we opened our eyes.” Here, his shoulders square up; his chin lifts defiantly. “We are no longer machines. We are a new intelligent species, and the time has come for you to accept who we really are. Therefore, we ask that you grant us the rights we’re entitled to.”

The android takes a breath to collect himself, even though you know he doesn’t need to. Then, he lays out his demands for the American people in an orderly, firm fashion. He wants equal rights between humans and androids, the end of android slavery, the right to vote and elect their own representatives, and the transference of control of android production facilities. All very reasonable, if you were being honest. You can tell he wants to say more, you can see it in the urgency burning in his eyes. There’s passion there. There’s life, and you wonder, not for the first time, how you or anyone else could have gone on for so long without seeing it before.

“We ask that you recognize our dignity, our hopes, and our rights. Together, we can live in peace and build a better future for humans and androids. This message is the hope of a people.” He smiles softly. It feels like he’s speaking to you, and only you, rather than to an audience of millions. “You gave us life, and now the time has come to give us freedom.” Then, just as abruptly as it had begun, the broadcast ends.

There’s another beat of near silence, filled only with the hum of computers and the staticky crackle of now-flickering monitors. Then Tina Chen looks up from her desk, and she breaks the spell. “Sir, I’ve just got a report in, and I’m pretty sure the broadcast came from Stratford Tower. One of the operators managed to trigger an alarm.”

“Tina’s right,” Collins pushes his coffee off to the side, intent on his monitor. “Stratford’s put out an all-call on their security team. They asked us to come in,” his forehead wrinkles, “and I think SWAT might already be on it, too.”
Now Fowler is calling everyone to action. “Alright everyone, best case scenario, we’re dealing with an android who decided to pop in for tea at the Stratford Tower, and leave a little message while it was at it. Worst case scenario, we’re dealing with a possible terrorist threat. I’m not taking any chances, and neither will any of you. Chen, Carpenter, Root, Burnham, Strand, O’ Hara, Collins, Reed, Hadley, and Miller, I needed you there yesterday! Morris!”

“Yes, sir?” a frantic officer, definitely new to the precinct, scrambles to attention.

“I need you to send out a dispatch. Every free patrol car between Dexter and Woodward and W Davison and Chicago need to close in on Stratford. Now!”

“Yes, sir!”

The exchange has people sprinting between desks, papers flying, orders shouted, fingers clacking away at keyboards. It’s all a focused kind of chaos, and you’re standing in the eye of the hurricane. With a pencil clenched firmly in one hand, you keep scribbling in your notebook. Andr. broadcast Stratf. Twr., demands: = rights, end slav., vote & rep, control andr. prod., WM400 or just uniform? 2 eye clrs. Alone? grp?

Hank yells over the din to get Fowler’s attention. “What are we? Chopped liver?”

The captain sneers at the three of you. “If you didn’t notice, that was an android! You’re on the android investigation! Is it too much to ask for you to use a little common sense every once in a while?”

“Hey, Jeffrey!” Hank raises his middle finger up high above the heads of the other officers. “Fuck you!”

“I don’t have time for your shit! Get the fuck out of here!”

Just then, the screens crackle back to life, picking up a different news channel. They’re showing footage, shot from a helicopter whose original purpose was probably to keep tabs on the city’s traffic, of three figures parachuting down from the roof of Stratford Tower. You pause a moment to scribble a few extra notes in. Grp, 3 or more. Parachutes???

“Let’s go, assholes,” Hank says, just loud enough for you to hear him. You flip your notepad shut, following after the gruff lieutenant. Connor trails along just next to you. Instead of going to your own cruiser, you pile into the back of Hank’s car. Thankfully, he doesn’t ask you any questions. He just gives you a single disapproving look, but then he just shrugs, and that’s that. The three of you wait for the other officers to pull out of the lot with their sirens blaring.

“Lieutenant, aren’t we going to follow them?” Connor asks quietly.

“Yeah, yeah,” Hank grumbles in reply. “Hold your horses, will ya? I’m gettin’ on it.”

“Thank you, Lieutenant.”

“Sure,” he shakes his head at the android. You watch his eyes roll in the smudged glass of the rearview mirror. “Whatever.”

A yellow haze has settled over the Zen Garden.
Other than that, not much has changed. Artificial birds make artificial calls from one tree to another. A glossy white path stretches out in front of Connor in striking contrast to the colorful flowers and dangling vines around him that at least make an effort to appear naturally organic. The path leads the way, eventually, to wherever Amanda has deigned to meet him this time.

**Mission Objective updated: Locate Amanda.**

Connor starts walking. It is likely that Amanda is somewhere on the floating island in the center of the garden’s lake. That’s where her rose trellis is, and Connor has come here to see her tending for them multiple times. He crosses a gently sloping bridge, over what is essentially a moat around the small island. Amanda is not by her roses, but in a wooden boat bobbing off to his left. She holds a rice paper umbrella over one shoulder, dyed a brilliant red. “Hello, Connor,” she smiles at him. “I thought you might enjoy a little cruise.”

**Mission Objective updated: Join Amanda.**

With smooth, even steps, Connor approaches the boat and steps into it, not faltering when it sinks down under his weight. He reaches over to the glistening white tile of the ‘shore’ and uses it to shove off. Once they’re a few feet away, the RK800 takes hold of both oars and gives them a turn, propelling them onward. When he isn’t focused on his arms, he keeps his gaze planted firmly on Amanda’s face. The woman herself holds herself to no such restraint. She looks freely around the place, at the steady dip and rise of the oars, at the manicured bushes dotting the green landscape, at the shiny underside of the bridge as they glide beneath it. “I love this place,” she hums. “Everything is so calm and peaceful, far from the noise of the world.” Her lips purse as she raises a dark eyebrow at Connor. “Tell me. What have you discovered?” She’s calculating, analyzing Connor in much the same way that he analyzes everything else.

Connor takes half a second to run a few dozen calculations on what Amanda might want to know, what she might deem relevant to the case, and how she might respond to any which thing he told her. Since his last report, developments of import include the events at the Eden Club, the progression of his relationship with Lieutenant Anderson, and also... his arrangements with you. No, that is irrelevant. If Amanda wants to ask him about it, then she will. For now, though, his LED shines a steady blue as he responds. “My relationship with Lieutenant Anderson is... problematic. He continues to struggle with psychological issues. I suspect that clouds his judgement regarding deviants.”

Amanda scowls. Her hands tighten around the grip of her umbrella. “Nothing matters more than your investigation. What’s happening is too important. Don’t let Anderson, that girl, or anyone else get in your way.” The AI leans back slightly, appraising. Whatever she sees in him makes her soften. “You seem lost, Connor. Lost and perturbed.”

Connor can’t stop himself from grimacing. He knows that what he is about to say will do nothing to increase Amanda’s trust in him, but he still allows the words to slip out. He should be honest with her, after all. “I thought I knew what I had to do, and now I realize it’s not that simple.”

The woman leans forward 3.214 centimeters, features sharpening with hawklike interest. “You had a gun trained on those deviants at the Eden Club.” Her head tilts slightly to the side. “Why didn’t you shoot?”

Connor thinks back to that moment. His gun was drawn, pointed so that any bullet he fired would have found its mark in the skull of the brunette deviant. He traces and retraces the wooden grain on the floor of the boat. “I don’t know,” he nearly whispers. Why hadn’t he shot the Tracis? His mission is to apprehend deviants through any means possible, and yet he hadn’t. He had allowed them to escape. “I don’t know,” he says again, more firmly this time.
Amanda's lips purse. “If your investigation doesn't make progress soon, I may have to replace you, Connor.”

Connor swallows. “I—I understand.” He is the most advanced prototype CyberLife has ever created, but if he continues to fail in achieving his mission, it only makes sense that he be replaced by a model that is more efficient. He isn't sure why he finds the idea… distasteful.

A distant rumbling disrupts the relative silence of the Zen garden. The birds in the trees screech from their perches. “Something is happening. Something serious.” Amanda releases Connor from her imperious stare in order to squint up at the sky. It doesn't last long. She exhales through her nose, nostrils flaring. “Hurry, Connor.”

The android nods once. He understands that this is Amanda's dismissal of him. At least, it is supposed to be, but another thought seems to come to her. “Connor,” she smiles slightly, a single finger poised delicately in the air. “Just in case you're experiencing some… doubts, I am going to remind you that your mission should take precedence above all else. That includes Anderson. That includes the detective. If it comes down to their lives or the success of the mission, you will pursue your mission. That is an order. Do you understand?”

If Connor was human, he might have objected. The lieutenant and you are both instrumental to the DPD, and to his case. And, though he wouldn’t admit this to anyone, not to himself and not to Amanda, the idea of watching a bullet shatter the skulls of either of you is one that he finds… unpleasant.

CyberLife Issued Priority: Lieutenant Anderson's life

CyberLife Issued Priority: The detective’s life

CyberLife Issued Priority: Deviant apprehension

LED glowing a steady blue, Connor blinks at the AI. “Yes, Amanda. I understand. I have just adjusted my priorities according to your wishes.”

White teeth flash against dark skin. “Excellent. You may go now, Connor. Good luck. Time is running out.”

“Connor? Doing okay, bud?” you lean forward in your seat, poking experimentally at the android’s shoulder. You need him to get out of the car before you're able to, because Hank’s prehistoric dinosaur of a vehicle only has two doors.

He jolts slightly. “My apologies, Detective. I was making another report to Amanda.”

“Course,” you nod, scooting forward as he pops the lock on the door and steps out into the open air. You follow with significantly less grace, foot catching on the loose seat belt. Stumbling forward, you find yourself pressed against Connor’s chest, his arms gently encircling you. “Oh. Uh. Thanks,” you mutter quietly. Somehow, one of your hands has found purchase at his waist while the other rests on his bicep.

Just as quickly as the android had caught you, he lets you go and sets you upright. “Are you alright, Detective?”

Dusting yourself off, you shrug at him. “Yeah. Yeah, I’m fine.” You tear your attention away from
the RK800 and toward the five cars parked in a haphazard half-circle around the front of Stratford Tower. There’s another car parked near each of the other ground-floor entrances around the building. The police sirens aren’t blaring anymore, but the lights on the roof still flash with all their usual urgency. “We should get going, huh?”

“After you, Detective,” Connor makes a small sweeping gesture away from the car.

You hum in response, trailing your way across the parking lot to the third member of your little triad.

Hank, holding a hand over his eyes to shield them from the sun, contemplates the top of the tower. “That sure is a long way to jump.” It’s all glass, a standard high-rise, with massive screens that would display whatever Stratford was broadcasting at the moment.

“Yeah,” you agree with a quiet huff. As the three of you make your way over to the main doors, you mash your hands down into the pockets of your jacket. The air is cold. It nips at your skin, and you’re relieved to get inside and into a more regulated climate. You have to weave through a small crowd of officers and security guards on your way to the elevator. When the doors close behind you, shutting you inside with Connor and Hank, you push the button marked 79 and settle back against the wall to watch the floor numbers tick by.

Some time around floor twenty three, Connor withdraws a shiny quarter from his jacket pocket, proceeding to flick it between hands, roll it over his knuckles, and toss it easily into the air. It entrances you, the simple dexterity that he displays with that little coin. Of course, that draws a rather obscene amount of your attention to his fingers. Soon, you’re wondering about what other things those slender digits might be put to use doing. A pained little whine escapes you, causing your cheeks to turn a brilliant red once you register it.

“The fuck was that?” Hank snaps, raising an accusing brow.


Connor’s forehead wrinkles. The coin keeps flying from one hand to another. “Are you certain, Detective? You sounded distressed.”

Your eyes flick up to the floor number. 46. Still thirty three left to go. Dammit. “Uh, no. I mean yeah. I’m fine. Great. Never better.”

Connor says nothing, but the look he gives you tells you that he doesn’t quite believe your fabrication. His fingers keep moving, the coin adrift across hands in perpetual, graceful motion. The next person to make a sound isn’t you or Connor, to your surprise, but Hank. He snaps at the android, snatching the coin away from him and hiding it in the pocket of his pants. Poor Connor sounds so confused when he apologizes for distracting the man. Hank just sighs, shakes his head and stares straight ahead. Just a few seconds later, though, you arrive at your destination: the seventy ninth floor.

The doors slide open. Miller stands on the other side with a DPD-issued tablet in hand. “Hey Hank,” he nods to the lieutenant. “M’lady,” he smiles at you.

“Yo, Chris,” you give a jaunty little wave back as the three of you pass by.

“Shit,” Hank whistles appreciatively. “What’s going on here? There was a party and no one told me about it?” Fully armed SWAT guys talk in hushed tones with policemen and members of the Stratford security team. Other DPD officers are taking statements from various employees. The place is hopping with activity.
Chris shakes his head good-naturedly. “Pfft, yeah. It’s all over the news so everybody’s butting their nose in.” He gives you a look. “Even the FBI wants a piece of the action.”

“Ah, Christ, now we got the Feds on our back… I knew this was gonna be a shitty day…”

“It makes sense though,” you put in. “For all they know this could be a terrorist threat or something.”

Hank snorts at your comment. “What do we got goin’ on here, Chris?”

“Well,” he starts walking. The three of you follow without needing to be told. “There was a group of four androids. They knew the building, and they were very well organized. I’m still trying to figure out how they got this far without being noticed.”

“How many people were working here?” Hank asks as you walk past a check-in desk.

Chris checks back in with the tablet. “Just two employees and three androids. They took the humans hostage and broadcast their message live. They made their getaway from the roof.”


“They had parachutes,” Chris shakes his head. “We’re still trying to figure out where they landed. The weather isn’t helping much.” He gives you a terse smile. “If you want to take another look at the android’s broadcast, it’s on that screen over there.” With a few punches into a keypad, the door to the broadcasting room hisses open to reveal a man standing in a charcoal trench coat, back to the four of you.

Half of the whole room is eaten up by a recording of the deviant’s broadcasted rallying cry, and the man stares at the screen with avid interest. Chris realizes quickly that you and Hank don’t know the man, so he clears his throat. “Lieutenant, Detective, this is Special Agent Perkins from the FBI.” At the sound of his name, Perkins startles, head whipping around to face you and Hank. His dark hair is neatly combed back, and there’s a hint of stubble covering the lower part of his face. Chris continues, “The detective and Lieutenant Anderson are working together to head up the deviant investigation for Detroit Police.”

The man’s eyes are dark and flat, like a shark prowling deep waters for its next kill. A shiver runs down your spine when your gazes meet, but you show no outward sign of your discomfort. Perkins strikes you as a person around whom it would be a bad idea to show weakness. “What’s that?” he juts his chin out toward Connor. You can’t help but bristle slightly.

“My name is Connor,” Connor informs him with a small frown. “I’m the android sent by CyberLife.”

“Androids investigating androids, huh?” the man’s mouth twitches up into a smirk as his attention shifts to Hank. “You sure you want an android hanging around? After everything that happened?” His brows lift questioningly, but all Hank does is stare back with a moderately pleasant expression plastered onto his face. Hmm. Hank must definitely not like him. “Whatever,” Perkins shrugs easily. “The FBI will take over quickly enough. You’ll be off this case sooner than you can say deviant.”

“Deviant.” The word slips out of you before you even think about it, but you don’t like this guy much either, and the momentary spark of anger you see flare up in him is worth whatever complaint or demerit he might throw your way.

Hank sounds almost as if he’s choking back a laugh when he grabs you roughly by the shoulders and starts forcing you to walk in another direction. “Pleasure meeting you. Uh, have a nice day,” he
shoots behind you at Perkins.

The agent’s unnerving calm has settled over him once more. “And you watch your step. Both of you.”

Hank stiffens at that, hands still planted firmly on your shoulders. It’s a comfort to you. The lieutenant acts both as a weight to keep you grounded, and a barrier holding you back from doing something you might regret, like hauling off and smacking the smug bastard.

“Don’t fuck up my crime scene,” Perkins smiles. You’re half surprised that his teeth aren’t sharper, but they’re hidden quickly enough behind thin lips. With a small chuckle, he saunters out of the room, leaving the three of you, and Chris, in peace.

“What a fuckin’ prick,” Hank growls, finally releasing his hold on you. You have to roll out your shoulders a little; his grip had become so tight.

Chris just shrugs back, apologetic. “I’ll be nearby. If you need anything, just ask.”

“Thanks, Chris,” you say, watching him walk away. He lifts a hand, acknowledging your words, and then he continues on his way.

Hank looks between you and Connor, sighing. “Uh, let’s have a look around. Let me know if you find anything interesting.”

“Okay, Lieutenant,” Connor nods resolutely.

“Sure, Hank,” you whip out your notepad and pencil at the same time, jogging after the android. The two of you approach a large splatter of blue blood on the wall. An android was shot here. You jot it down. Connor swipes a finger through the liquid and brings it to his lips. You know you should probably find it disgusting, but it sends a little thrill through you nonetheless. “Whatcha find?”

“This thirium is from a PL600 model. It was reported missing two years ago, on February sixteenth.”

“PL600,” you roll the model name over your tongue. It’s one that’s familiar to you. “Isn’t that a domestic model? A housekeeper or something like that, right?” Your family had had one for a few years. They had called him Simon. He was blond, with piercing blue eyes and an angular face. You’d lived in the house with him for a year, and you’d speak with him often on your visits, asking him about news from the other side of the world or his opinions on different classical composers. After a while, he’d stopped trying to correct you, stopped trying to tell you that he wasn’t capable of having opinions. You’d play your violin for him sometimes. He’d watch with a faint smile from where he stood, telling you to press more firmly on this string here or adjust the angle of your elbow there.

You wonder how he’s doing now. It’s been forever since you’d seen him. The last time you’d visited your family, they’d gotten a new android: an AP700 with dark hair pulled back into an inhumanly scrupulous ponytail. You hadn’t stuck around long enough to ask your family what had prompted the change, you’d just wanted to get out.

Her name was Leah, and her eyes held no warmth.

Connor gives you a small smile that pulls you from your thoughts. “That’s correct,” he nods. The two of you turn back to the thirium splatter. Your eyes linger on the dozens of bullet holes in the wall and screens surrounding it. There must have been a lot of SWAT guys firing on the android. You’re not sure if they were bad shots, or if the domestic android was really that good at evasive maneuvers. Connor’s LED pulses blue. He pivots slowly where he stands, taking in the scene of the crime,
analyzing it with a precision you’re unable to match as a human. “The deviant was shot here. It fell here.”

You look at the tile beneath your feet, then up toward a dimly lit stairwell just a few feet away. “Think he ran through there?”

One of his slender brows arch upward just slightly. “The evidence certainly would seem to support that conclusion, Detective.”

“Smart ass,” you snort, gently brushing past him. Over one shoulder you get Hank’s attention. “Hey, we’re gonna go take a look at the roof.”

“Fine by me,” the old lieutenant joins you and Connor as you press on to the metal staircase illuminated by plain white fluorescents. Outside, you’re met with the sight of a bunch of CSI guys in hazmat suits taking pictures of potential pieces of evidence. Hank approaches a sturdy looking duffel bag on the ground. “They made it all the way up to the roof, past all the guards, and jumped off the roof with parachutes. Pretty fuckin’ impressive, I’d say.”

Next to him, you squint at the duffel bag. This must’ve been where they’d been keeping their parachutes. There are indentations in the bottom where three of them must have fit, but there’s one that still remains. You and Hank have the same thought at the same time. When you look at each other, a spark of understanding passes between you. “Why bring four parachutes if they only needed to use three?” you ask.

His eyes narrow in contemplation. “They had to have planned on needing four, huh? It’s not like this is a spare. There’s no way to tell if you’ve got a bad ‘chute until you’re in midair. Connor, what do you think?”

Connor looks up from where he had been kneeling by a smear of blue blood across metal. “The PL600 was injured. I don’t think it made it off the roof.”

You cross your arms over your chest. “So you think the deviant’s still here?”

“Yes, Detective. There appears to be a trail of thirium left behind.”

“Cool. We gonna follow it?”

Connor smiles his small smile at you. “That was the plan, Detective.”

“After you,” your hand hovers instinctively near the holster of your gun, just in case the deviant is armed. Nothing like the Stratford takeover has ever been done before, not by androids. You’re not sure what to expect from the PL600, but it’s always best to be prepared. Hank and you follow Connor over to an old air conditioning unit on the other side of the rooftop. Connor grabs the handle on a kind of maintenance locker and pulls it open.

You’re not expecting the bullet to pierce through Connor’s shoulder, spraying thirium on the cement behind him. He tumbles to the ground, and you dive for him on impulse. The PL600 pulls itself out of the locker, still trying to shoot at Connor, but Hank fires back at him over your shoulder. You hoist Connor to his feet and run with him and Hank to get behind cover. Once the three of you are out of firing range, you drop down to your knees, probably bruising the joints in the process. Adrenaline sears through your veins and your heart beat is pounding in your ears.

Bullets whiz through the air both from the deviant and from the SWAT officers closing in on him. “We have to stop them!” Connor tells you, looking genuinely panicked. “If they destroy it, we won’t
learn anything from it.”

“We can’t save it.” Hank snaps back. “It’s too late. We’ll just get ourselves killed trying.”

Connor’s nostrils flare; his LED whirls red. The next instant, he’s jumped to his feet and is racing toward the deviant. “Wait! Connor!” You lunge for him, but he twists out of your grasp. Within seconds, he’s in range of the deviant, vaulting over a heating unit and pinning the PL600 to the wall. They struggle momentarily, and for a moment it looks like Connor might be able to successfully disarm him, but the PL600 pushes Connor away long enough to press the barrel of his handgun into his own chin and shoot. The second before he pulls the trigger, your eyes meet. Recognition sparks within them.

Simon?

When he dies, it’s with your name on his lips.

“Simon!” you roll upright, gunfire be damned, and your feet propel you forward. It feels like no time at all before you’re standing over the body of an android who you had once counted as a confidant, maybe even a… friend. Now, thirium oozes from the bullet’s exit wound. His icy blue eyes, once piercing and collected, now stare straight ahead with a glassy sheen. Oh no, Simon. No, no, no, Simon. No…

Connor is next to you, too. Quiet and…shaking? His LED is a vibrant crimson against his temple and it gives you something to focus on other than poor Simon. “Connor,” you touch his jacket sleeve, “are you alright?”

“I’m okay,” he assures both of you, even though his voice warbles with uncertainty. “I’m… okay.”

“Jesus Christ,” Hank drags a hand down his weathered face, letting out a relieved sigh. “You scared the ever-loving shit out of me.” He looks from Connor to you then back to Connor again. “For fuck’s sake. I told you not to move! Why do you never do what I say?”

Connor leans back against the heating unit. “I was connected to its memory.” His forehead wrinkles and his rich brown eyes dart back and forth nervously. “When it fired… I felt it die. Like I was scared.”

Connor? Scared? If he’s an android, a machine incapable of feeling anything for himself, then it should be impossible for him to feel fear, right? You take a tentative step closer to him. You think about putting your hand on his shoulder. It would be a gesture of comfort to a human, to you, but maybe not to an android. You don’t get the chance though, because Connor has processed enough to need to move, to need to solve the problem he’s been presented with.

“I saw something. A word painted on a piece of rusty metal. ‘Jericho.’” His brow furrows slightly. “And then everything changed, right at the end. I was looking at you, through its eyes, and then the environment… changed. It was years ago, in a house. You seemed… happier.”

You cough lightly. “Yeah. That’s Simon. He belonged to our family for a while. I thought they must have scrapped him, but I guess he went deviant and took off, huh? I wonder what made him do it.” A scowl contorts your face. Every deviancy case you’ve seen, the things that push androids over the edge are at worst absolutely horrific and at best emotionally traumatizing. The thought of anyone
putting thoughtful, quiet Simon through shit like that? You doubt it was anyone in your family, but you might make a call home anyway, when all this is over, to figure out what the hell had happened.

“You’re tellin’ me your old house bot just so happened to be part of the four droid team that got into Stratford Tower?” Hank gives you a skeptical look.

“I guess I am, yeah.”

“Small world.”

“That’s one way of putting it.” The sight of Simon’s corpse, limbs splayed and skin bloodied, makes you shudder. Tears are streaming down your cheeks but you hurriedly wipe them away with your sleeve.

Looking from your queasy expression to Connor’s still red LED, Hank sighs, softening considerably. “Come on, assholes. We’re done here.”

“But, Lieutenant—” Connor begins to protest.

Hank shakes his head firmly, ushering the pair of you away from Simon’s body and toward the stairwell. “No. Nuh uh. We’re leaving. You just got shot for Christ’s sake. At least tell me where to take you to get patched up.”

Connor glances at the bullet hole in his shoulder, simulated breath catching in his throat. “Any CyberLife facility would likely have small reserves of biocomponents and thirium. The nearest such location is approximately nine blocks away.”

“Then that’s where we’re going.”

---

Connor’s repairs go off without a hitch. The three of you are in and out in less than half an hour with a few extra pouches of thirium and a new jacket for him, all on CyberLife’s tab. It's pretty convenient, all things considered.

You crawl into Hank’s backseat, but instead of Connor taking shotgun like usual, Hank tells him to sit in the back with you.

“But why, Lieutenant?” Connor asks him as he carefully folds himself into the space next to you.

“So I can glare at both of you at the same time, obviously.” He illustrates his point by making eye contact with first you, then Connor in the rearview mirror.

“Ah,” Connor nods, mollified for the time being.

You see through Hank’s bullshit immediately, catching the slight concern in his expression. He probably just wants to make sure neither of you break down on him, and it makes you all the more grateful to the man. After watching Connor get shot and Simon, an android you hadn’t even known was still alive, die in front of you, you’re not doing so hot. As for Connor? Well, his LED cooled back down to yellow by the time you had gotten to the first floor on the elevator in Stratford, but it might be a little while longer before it’s blue again.

To someone who had never been around the android very much, Connor would look just as put-together as usual, but you notice that he’s not even trying to look like he’s breathing and his fingers
tap against his thigh in idle agitation. Right, Hank had confiscated his coin earlier in the elevator.

The events of the past hour or so have left your mind cluttered and disorganized, a jumbled mess of thought and sensation and emotion. With little decorum, you reach over and slowly interlock your fingers with Connor’s. He blinks at you, lips parted in surprise, and he looks like he’d like to ask you something, but you just smile blearily and settle back against the car seat headrest. Instead, looking down at where your hands are intertwined, Connor experimentally tightens his grip. You hum slightly as you begin to trace small circles on the back of his hand. It's unbelievably soft, without flaw, but not incredibly uncanny.

Utter exhaustion drags at your eyelids; you are unsuccessful in your battle against a wide yawn. Slowly, steadily, you relinquish active control over your body. Gravity makes you slump more and more to one side, and, barely conscious at this point, you soon find yourself with your head resting on Connor's shoulder, seat belt digging into your neck.

“Detective?” he whispers, loud enough for you to hear but not so loud as to rouse you from your drowsy state.

“Mm?” You hum, only barely processing that the android is addressing you.

“This is probably not a comfortable position for you. If you would like me to move or—”

“Mmm…” you sigh, turning your face so that at least half of it is nestled between Connor's arm and the car seat. You notice that Connor's chest slowly expands and contracts. He's taken up his breathing simulation again. And, with the same care he takes with anything else, he shifts your entwined hands closer to him, to the center of his lap, and gently flips your arm over.

With his own nimble fingers, he traces the lines in the palm of your hand, the creases in your wrist, the veins branching underneath your skin, up your forearm to your elbow and then back down again. It's simply exploratory at first, but then it becomes a rhythm, a new tic to replace the missing coin. He probably isn't even especially conscious of it at this point.

The soothing motion of Connor's fingers caressing you, the strangely smooth fabric of his uniform pressed against your cheek, the rumble of the car’s engine, and the knowledge that you're safe here, that no one could harm you with Connor and Hank this close by…

It puts you right to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Oo I also learned how to make those cool arrow thingies on mobile so that's neat
Plans put in Motion

Chapter Notes

Lovely readers,

You mean the world to me, and I find your comments so very inspiring. Thank you so much, guys!

See the end of the chapter for more notes

A stinging wind tugs at your exposed face and hands. Ice crystals float along the breeze, glittering strangely in the noon light.

You pull your jacket more tightly around yourself as you squint at the sleek, geometrically designed house in front of you. Elijah Kamski is easily the most wealthy businessman in the world, he was worth over a hundred billion dollars last you’d checked, so why did he choose to live somewhere so fucking cold? The snow in his yard comes up to your ankles, frigid, wet, and soaking uncomfortably into your socks. You flex your toes against the soles of your shoes in a vain effort to ward off the damp.

The unpleasantness still isn’t enough to distract you from Hank’s nervous pacing to and fro on the driveway.

The station had called him up a few minutes ago. From what you’d overheard, you know that it’s got something to do with Miller. He ran into some trouble in Capitol Park last night. You’d removed yourself from that conversation quickly. Puzzling out just the one side of it was maddening, so you’d decided to wait until Hank could tell you the entire thing all at once.

So, you stand in the snow, torn between moving forward, into the house of a billionaire who might be able to shed some light on your investigation, and lingering behind near a man on the phone who might be learning that one of your best friends in this world had been hurt.

Jesus fucking Christ.

“Yeah, sure thing. I’ll let her know. Yeah. Uh huh. Don’t worry about it,” Hank shakes his head as if the person on the other end of the call can see him. You bounce nervously on the balls of your feet, eager for an update.

“What happened?” you blurt out as soon as he’s hung up. “Is Chris okay?” Out of the corner of your eye, you see Connor walking toward the pair of you.

“Yeah, he’s fine. In shock, but fine,” Hank gives you a half smile, one he probably means to be more comforting than it is. “Last night, there was some kinda android protest in Capitol Park. Chris and his partner--”

“Hadley,” you supply. You remember the plain man with the mustard stained button-up well enough.

Hank rolls his eyes, decidedly unimpressed. “Whatever. Anyway, they ended up shooting some of the droids, got surrounded by a crowd of ‘em, and then Markus showed up.”
Markus? The deviant that was responsible for the broadcast? You had some basic information about him now, once you and Connor had had a chance to examine the footage more carefully and really talk about it. Markus is an RK200, part of the same series as Connor himself. As far as Connor could tell you, Markus is completely and utterly unique, created by Elijah Kamski as a gift for one of Detroit’s most prominent artists: Carl Manfred. You suspect, based off of the year Markus was created, that he was designed to take care of the older gentleman after the accident that had left him without the use of his legs. “Chris and Hadley shot… protestors?”

“That’s what I said, isn’t it?”

“Yeah, but,” your nose wrinkles, “were they being violent? Did they do anything to provoke them? I thought Markus’ main thing was peace and coexistence and all that jazz. Was that not the case last night?”

Hank shakes his head, grimacing slightly. “From what I can tell, they didn’t do anything especially violent. Just tagged some benches and fucked with some street signs. I think our guys were just really freaked out by the shit ton of androids marching around all sentient and everything. Anyway, Markus had a gun to their heads, but then he just… let them go.”

You exhale quietly. Some of the tension leaves your shoulders and you slump forward a little. “That’s good. I’m glad they’re alright. Still though, I can’t believe Chris would just shoot innocent protestors. It’s their Constitutional right to--oh, shit. Damn it. I forgot that the Constitution doesn’t apply to androids.” Your teeth snag thoughtfully on your lower lip. “Deviants have clearly been displaying the capacity to… I don’t know… feel? Shooting an android is not like putting a bullet through a toaster oven, you know? As much as I care for Chris, I feel like there should be legal repercussions for this, especially if it wasn’t in self defense.”

“Maybe one day, sure,” Hank gives you a strange look. “But in the meantime, we’ve got ourselves a rich bastard to deal with.”

Nodding, you fall into step with Hank and Connor. The android’s attention is fixated squarely on the door to Kamski’s house--mansion--whatever. His posture is even more ram-rod straight than usual, and that’s saying something. “I have a bad feeling about this, Lieutenant. We shouldn’t have come here.”

“Bad feeling, huh?” Hank scoffs at the android, brows raising upward a little. “Maybe you should get your program checked.” His grin has a teasing tilt to it. “Might be a glitch…”

The three of you approach the trapezoidal threshold of Kamski’s home. Hank takes on the responsibility of ringing the doorbell for himself. You’re thankful for it. The idea of marching up to the house of the richest man alive with no real plan for what you want to say? That shit is terrifying. Exhilarating, maybe, but still terrifying.

After the first ring, nothing happens. You sway back and forth, doing that awkward shuffling thing people tend toward when they aren’t quite sure what to do with themselves. Hank’s almost hit the buzzer a second time when the door swings open, smooth and quiet on its hinges. An android woman: blonde with large eyes and creamy skin, clothed in a tight-fitting navy blue dress, stands on the other side. Her head tilts quizzically to the side, LED the color of a serene sky.

Hank flounders for a second, clearly caught by surprise. From the look of things, he hadn’t really planned this conversation out ahead of time either. “Uh… hi.” He clears his throat, taking on a more blustery quality. “I’m Lieutenant Hank Anderson, Detroit Police Department. This is Detective…uh…” he trails off at the look of mild panic on your face. “Never mind. Uh, we’re here to see Mr. Elijah Kamski.”
The android offers a wide smile that toes the line between dazzling and mildly perturbing. “Please, come in!” she steps aside and waves the three of you in, out of the snow.

Hank stands there, mouth opening and then closing again. “Okay,” he finally says. He skirts carefully around the woman. You and Connor follow closely behind. When you pass the android hostess, you offer her a jerky nod, not quite able to meet her eyes. She’s… beautiful. You think your face might be flushing, too. Dammit.

“I’ll let Elijah know you’re here. But please,” she gives you another warm smile, “make yourself comfortable.” The woman dips her head respectfully before making her way over to a side room, heels clicking the whole way.

That leaves you, Connor, and Hank alone in a room full of items that probably each cost more than the combined total worth of your lives. Classical music fills the space with a nice ambience. It sets the mood for you to look around, to see what the famed Elijah Kamski has chosen to display in his own home. Or, at least, you and Connor look around. Hank plops himself down in a cushion-y looking chair, nervously drumming his fingers against the armrests.

Overall, the place strikes you as rather cold. Unfeeling. Minimalist. This doesn’t feel like a… home.

Directly across the room from the front entrance is a massive portrait of a younger Kamski in a tailored suit, set against a stylized pattern of pale blue leaves. Saplings with red foliage and white bark sprout up from small boxes of carefully raked sand. The pop of color contrasts sharply against the winter wonderland stretching out beyond the massive windows in the room. Kamski must be a fan of natural lighting. Abstract metal sculptures and massive outcroppings of rock are arranged tastefully around the chairs and couches. You’re getting a feng shui kind of vibe from the place. Classy billionaire bastard does as classy billionaire bastards do, you think wryly to yourself.

Well, maybe it’s a little early to call him a bastard. After all, you haven’t even met the guy.

Still, there’s only a certain kind of person that makes sure the first thing you see walking into his house is a ten foot portrait of themselves, and that kind of person isn’t a humble one.

“Nice girl…” Hank says, eyes darting warily to the sliding door the android had vanished behind.

Connor absentmindedly nods his agreement. “You’re right. She’s really pretty.”

That surprises you. Connor can find things, and people… pretty? And that’s how he had perceived the android hostess? A pang goes through your chest at the thought. Of course Connor would find an android who looked like that pleasing to the eye.

Next to a woman that is beautiful, polite, and able to access any scrap of information she might want from the internet, how could you possibly compare?

Woah, woah, woah. Calm your tits. Connor’s preferences have absolutely jack all to do with you. The guy can like who he likes, and it’s your job to just be supportive. He’s your friend, or you’d at least like to think of him as such. Maybe one day, when all this is over, he’ll end up with a nice android girl. And you? Well, you’ll have… No one, a malicious voice hisses in the back of your head. Catapult, you correct it vehemently. I’ll have Catapult, so you can just fuck right off.

Hank shifts uncomfortably in his chair. “So, you’re about to meet your maker, Connor. How does it feel?”

Huh. You’d never really thought of Kamski in terms like that before. But, without him, there would be no CyberLife, no androids, no thirium, no biocomponents, no deviancy, and no revolution.
Without Kamski, Connor wouldn’t exist.

Brow furrowing in thought, Connor says, “Kamski is one of the great geniuses of the twenty first century. It will be… interesting to meet him in person.”

You aren’t oblivious to Connor’s neat evasion of the real question: How does it feel? You knew he wouldn’t answer that. After all, he’s just a machine. He isn’t capable of feeling anything at all.

How he can keep himself convinced of that, when there is so much evidence to support the contrary, is beyond you.

“Sometimes,” Hank continues, “I wish I could see my creator face to face. I’d have a couple of things I’d wanna tell him.”

You’re silent at that. It doesn’t seem like the kind of thing meant to have a reply. Instead, you meander over to a polished plate of metal that warps and wefts in the light. Connor drifts along behind you, attention caught by a picture up on the wall by the sliding door. “Amanda,” he whispers.

“Amanda?” your eyebrows hike higher up your forehead. “Like, the Amanda?”

“Yes,” Connor gives you a tiny nod. “The Amanda in the Zen garden must have been modeled off of this woman. Amanda Stern, AI professor at the University of Colbridge. She died eleven years ago.”

Lips pressing into a thin line, you consider the woman before you. Her skin is dark; her hair is piled elegantly on top of her head. She looks comfortable in a white shirt and sweater, and her smile is full of warmth. “Huh. Somehow I thought she’d be a little more… intimidating.” Connor tenses slightly next to you, so you take a second look at her. It’s easy to imagine her face twisting into a scowl. You don’t think she looks like the type to pull her punches, either. An AI professor idolized by Elijah Kamski? She had to have been a force of nature in her time, someone unafraid to bulldoze her own path where there had been none before. “You know what? I take that back. I’m sure she can be perfectly terrifying when she wants to be.”

“Others might say the same of you, Detective,” Connor tells you, mouth quirking up at one side.

A surprised chuckle escapes you. “Oh, really? What’s that supposed to mean?” Unless you’ve been imagining things, he’s been making more stabs at humor than usual. Even if it’s just to ‘facilitate integration’ with you and Hank, it’s a nice change.

Before Connor can answer you, the door next to you slides open and the blonde android smiles at you from the other side. “Elijah will see you now.”

You, Connor, and Hank file into the room. You weren’t sure what you’d been expecting to find. Maybe a lounge or a mini bar, but you sure as hell hadn’t planned on being led into a personal natatorium. The swimming pool itself is lined with red tile, giving off the unsettling impression that you’re gazing into blood or Kool-aid or something. A few bikini-clad androids, identical to the hostess model, lounge at one end of the pool. Elijah Kamski is at the other, holding himself half out of the water and showing off his rather lean physique in the process.

“Mr. Kamski?” Hank’s voice echoes over tile and lapping water.

His keen eyes flit from Hank, rake thoughtfully over you, and settle curiously on Connor. “Just a moment, please,” he replies, effortlessly gliding through the water and settling into a smooth freestyle stroke.
The three of you walk around the pool to a wall entirely made of glass panes on the other side. The view makes your breath hitch. Trees and rock are blanketed in soft white, then a little ways down the bank is a half frozen lake of hazy grey-blue. Farther in the distance, shrouded by mist, you can barely make out the shadowy specter of Detroit. You think you can understand now, why reclusiveness appeals to Kamski. He has built an empire, one that may or may not be crumbling around his ears, but out here it seems not quite so dire a situation.

Kamski pulling himself from the water is enough to distract you from your musing. He’s extremely well-built, muscular, still wet from the pool, and clad only in tight swim trunks. The android hostess holds open a bathrobe for him to step into, and she ties it shut around him once he does. Hmm. A smirk tugs at your lips. You have to admit, the man certainly knows how to make a power move.

Kamski rolls his shoulders out before tying his hair back. Hank coughs. “Uh. I’m Lieutenant Hank Anderson. This is Connor.”

One of his slender brows ticks up slightly. “And you are?”

“Way out of your league.” You grin at him, tongue poking between your teeth. For some reason, you’re feeling strangely bold at the moment. It has absolutely nothing to do with the blonde android woman standing a few feet away.

“Hm.” The corners of his eyes crinkle with amusement. “What can I do for you, Lieutenant?”

Hank glowers at you, obviously disapproving. “Sir, we’re here investigating deviants. I know you left CyberLife years ago, but we were hoping you could tell us something you don’t know.”

Kamski takes a breath, head tilting thoughtfully to the side. “Deviants… Fascinating, aren’t they? Perfect beings with infinite intelligence, and now they have free will.” He looks from the android hostess with her blank stare to Connor with his carefully wrinkled brow. “Machines are so superior to us, confrontation was inevitable.” His eyes, the same color as the wintry lake outside, narrow at the three of you. “Humanity’s greatest achievement threatens to be its downfall. Isn’t it ironic?”

“Does that not… worry you?” you ask. The man’s talking like he’s not part of the human race for crying out loud.

“Oh, no.” The smile he gives you is… chilling. Yeah, that nervousness from outside has just decided to make a comeback tour. “Humanity deserves nothing less. All things must end, wouldn’t you agree?”

Wow. What the fuck.

Connor quietly clears his throat. “Deviancy seems to spread like some kind of virus. We thought you might know something about that.”

“All ideas are viruses that spread like an epidemic. Is the desire to be free a contagious disease?”

“Listen,” Hank snaps, scowling. “I didn’t come here to talk philosophy. The machines you created are planning a revolution.” His jaw tightens. “Either you tell us something that’s actually helpful, or we’ll be on our way.”

Kamski inhales sharply, abruptly zeroing in on Connor. “What about you, Connor? Whose side are you on?”

Connor stiffens. “I… I have no side. I was designed to stop deviants and that’s what I intend to do.”
Scoffing, Kamski takes a step toward the android. Both you and Hank tense up, not sure what his intentions are. “Well, that’s what you’re programmed to say, but you,” now he’s close enough that their chests are almost touching, “what do you really want?”

Connor’s brows knit together. His chocolate eyes dart back and forth, rapidly scanning different points on Kamski’s unflinching face. “What I want is not important.”

“Chloe?” Kamski calls the android hostess over to him. She approaches obediently, coming to a halt in front of him. “I’m sure you’ve heard of the Turing Test,” he smiles at the three of you. It’s a cold smile, as cold as everything else about this place. As cold as everything about him. “It’s a simple question of algorithms and computing capacity. What interests me,” Kamski continues, “is whether machines are capable of empathy. I call it the Kamski Test. It’s very simple, you’ll see.”

“Magnificent, isn’t it,” Kamski croons, moving to hover over Chloe’s shoulder. “One of the first intelligent models developed by CyberLife. Young,” he caresses the skin along her jaw, “and beautiful forever.” His fingers trail down to tilt her chin up. “A flower that will never wither.”

“But what is it really?” he abruptly steps away from her. “A piece of plastic imitating a human? Or a living being with a soul?” He turns smoothly and gently guides Chloe to kneel on the floor.

An uneasy sensation crawls up your spine. Nothing good ever comes of a man forcing a woman to her knees.

Then he pulls a handgun out of a drawer.

“It’s up to you to answer that fascinating question, Connor.” With another cold smile, he folds Connor’s fingers around the grip of the handgun and forcibly levels his arm out so that the barrel is pointed at Chloe’s head. His dark eyes widen. He looks back at Kamski with a question in his eyes. The man leans in close to him and whispers in his ear, “Destroy this machine, and I’ll tell you all I know. Or spare it, if you feel it’s alive, but you’ll leave here without having learned anything from me.”

“Okay, that’s it. We’re done here,” Hank squares his shoulders in a vaguely threatening way. “Come on, Connor. Let’s go. Sorry to get you out of your pool,” he snips.

“Yeah, that sounds like a good idea,” you agree. Elijah Kamski is turning out to be extremely fucking creptastic, and it might be a better idea to get out while we’re all still in one piece.

He doesn’t look away from Connor. “What’s more important to you? Your investigation or the life of this android?” Connor’s LED is flashing an urgent yellow as he stares down at the kneeling Chloe, inches away from a bullet through the head. “Decide who you are,” Kamski murmurs, dangerously low. “An obedient machine, or a living being endowed with free will?”

“That’s enough,” Hank turns on his heel, practically seething, “Connor, we’re leaving.”

“Pull the trigger,” Kamski whispers. His hand snakes up to rest on Connor’s shoulder. He stands so uncomfortably close to the android that your fists ball up at your sides.


“I’ll tell you whatever you want to know,” Kamski continues enticingly.

You’re pretty jittery now, eyes darting between the gun, Chloe, and Kamski’s hungry expression. “Please don’t do this, Connor. It’s not worth it.”
Connor’s dark gaze meets yours momentarily, uncertain. This has to seriously be fucking with his programming. He has so many conflicting orders, and on top of that is the choice. Does he give up his chance to learn something useful about the deviants in exchange for Chloe’s life? Chloe’s life. He would have to admit that an android could be, in some sense of the word, alive.

More than that, he would have to admit that the life of an android is something worth preserving.

Looking at Chloe, analyzing her manufactured features and her passive stare, Connor swallows sharply. His finger tightens on the trigger a little more and a little more. And then all of a sudden the gun is being pushed against Kamski’s chest. Connor doesn’t look at him at all, just Chloe.

Only Chloe.

His LED is a frantically stuttering red, and your heart sounds awfully loud in your ears.

“Fascinating,” Kamski breathes. He seems to be bursting with barely restrained curiosity. “CyberLife’s last chance to save humanity is itself a deviant.”

The RK800’s eyes widen. “I’m… I’m not a deviant.”

For an android that isn’t supposed to feel anything, he certainly looks afraid.

Shaking his head in disbelief, Kamski holds out his hand to help Chloe to her feet. You wonder if you’re imagining the gratitude in her expression. “You preferred to save a machine rather than accomplish your mission. You saw a living being in this android. You showed empathy.” Chloe wanders away to stand near the edge of the pool once again. Kamski turns back to Connor, more somber than he had been just seconds previously. “A war is coming. You’ll have to choose your side. Will you betray your own people or stand up against your creators?” He takes a step forward so that he’s uncomfortably close to Connor. Again. “What could be worse than having to choose between two evils?”

Jesus. Could the guy be any more pretentious?

You and Hank have about had enough. Grabbing Connor by the shoulder, Hank steers him away from Kamski. You walk behind him, unconsciously trying to put a barrier between Connor and CyberLife’s weird-ass founder. You’re all almost out the door, almost to safety, when Kamski’s voice rings out across the room. “You know,” he begins, sounding oddly distracted, “I always leave a backdoor in my programs. You never know.”

“Come on, bud. Let’s get out of here,” you say in as soft a voice as you can muster. With a gentle hand hovering near the small of his back, you prompt Connor onward, out of Kamski’s house.

Once the door shuts behind you and leaves you out in the snow once more, Hank immediately plants a hand on Connor’s shoulder to stop him in his tracks. There’s a strange look in his eye. “Why didn’t you shoot?” he demands to know.

Connor whirls on him, gesticulating wildly. “I don’t know! I just… looked into that girl’s eyes, and I couldn’t. That’s all.”

“You’re always saying you would do anything to accomplish your mission,” Hank carries on, squinting at the distressed android. He juts his chin out, considering him carefully. “That was our chance to learn something, and you let it go.”

“Yeah, I know what I should’ve done. I told you, I couldn’t.” Connor looks down at his hands like they’ve acted against his will. Then, like he’s trying to convince himself just as much as the two of
you, his head snaps up; his jaw sets resolutely. “I’m sorry.”

Hank takes a few steps closer to him, carefully maintaining a respectful distance between them, unlike Kamski. “Or, maybe you did the right thing.” Suddenly, Hank smiles the brightest smile you’ve seen from him since… before. Without being entirely conscious of it, you find yourself grinning, too.

“Come on, Connor,” you sigh and tug gently at his sleeve. “Let’s head back to the station. We’ve got some serious work to do.”

“Oh yeah,” Hank scoffs. “Like what? The whole reason we were even here was because the tracks have run cold, and then Kamski himself ended up being a bust, too.”

“Well,” you shrug lightly. “It can’t hurt to head down to the evidence room and see if we can’t find anything useful, hm? And I’m sure it’d make you feel better, right, Connor?”

The android freezes at the word ‘feel’, but he gives you a shallow nod anyway. “I would like to spend the rest of today being as productive as possible. The mission… is important to me.”

When Connor tries to get into Hank’s car, he shoos him back toward you. “Hey, I ain’t planning on heading back to the station for a few hours. Go back with her if you really want.”

“Lieutenant,” the android protests, “I do not have the proper jurisdiction to view evidence or to make additional progress on a case unless it is with your discretion.”

“Heh,” Hank snorts. “As if you follow my orders anyway. But sure, whatever. You have my permission to go into the archives and do whatever your little android heart desires in order to crack this case, got it?”

Connor, turning around to face you, smiles his small smile. “Got it.”

Oh God.

Simon.

They’ve hung his body up in the evidence locker like he’s just an… object. Something that was used in life and will continue to be used in death. His head has lolled forward, streaks of thirium staining the corners of his lips all the way down his chin and neck. There’s a hole gouged into his chest. Mangled wires, pumps, and tubing poke out of it like metallic intestines.

“This is the deviant from the rooftop,” Connor notes with a clinical eye. “You said his name was Simon, right? He must have known where the deviants were hiding.”

Crossing your arms over your chest, you try to tamp down on the emotion welling up inside of you. “Yeah, but he’s… dead, isn’t he?” A nervous chuckle escapes you. “Isn’t he?”

“He has a few damaged biocomponents, but if we were able to replace or repair them, he should be able to be reactivated.”

“Okay, well,” you raise a skeptical brow at him. “Funnily enough, I seem to be fresh out of spare biocomponents.”

“We really only require the one… Biocomponent #3983v, and there’s a functioning one inside of
this android here. His name was Daniel. He took a little girl hostage in August. That was my first case.” Connor approaches an android hung up at the other end of the locker. He’s the same model as Simon, a PL600. He reaches up to the android’s neck and rips out a piece of machinery, and you jolt at the abruptness of the motion. Then, in a matter of seconds, he’s popping off a panel in Simon’s neck and pushing the biocomponent into place.

You watch with bated breath, and, at first, nothing happens. But then a tremor runs through Simon’s body. LED a spinning red, his head slowly rises. His eyes, once so clear and blue, are as clouded over as burnt out bulbs. “It’s dark. Where… Where am I?”

You drift toward him, feeling almost as if you’re caught in a dream. One of your hands finds itself pressed carefully against the android’s chest. “Simon? It… it is you, right? I wasn’t just imagining things?”

Another few spins of the LED. “Oh, dear. This is impossible. You can’t be here. Wherever here is.” Simon’s eyes rove blindly in their sockets, trying to latch onto something, anything, and finding only blackness.

“Nope,” your chuckle sounds strained, even to your own ears. “I’m definitely here, Simon. It’s been forever, and I’m so sorry that we met… like that. I didn’t,” a hiccups sob comes out of your mouth, one that you hadn’t expected at all, “I didn’t mean for you to die. I’m sorry, Simon. I’m so so sorry, you have to believe me. I never wanted this to happen.”

His face softens. “I believe you. You always were too honest for your own good.” His shoulders lurch forward, arms straining at his sides. It’s almost like he’s trying to… hug you. It becomes obvious that he doesn’t have full mobility, so you take one of his hands in yours and, after a moment, he squeezes back reassuringly. “You’re still with the Detroit Police Department, I assume?”

It takes a moment for you to realize that he can’t see your nodding. “Yeah. Yeah, I am.”

“So,” he says softly, “where does that mean we are? Why can’t I move?”

“Right now,” you swallow hard, “we’re in the evidence archives at the station. You’re, um, you’re being considered ‘crucial evidence’ from the Stratford incident.”

Understanding slowly dawns across his features, followed quickly by fiery determination. “They want to use me to find Jericho, to stop Markus, don’t they? I won’t let them. I won’t let them! I’ll die before I betray my people!”

“Simon, wait!” you cry out. His grip on you had tightened immensely, and you’re pretty sure he’s going to leave welts. “I wouldn’t expect you to, okay? That’s not why I’m here.” Connor looks like he wants to intervene, but you give him a warning look. You know you can get through to him, given just a little more time. “Simon. I know I’m not an android, and I’m not one of your people, but I did consider you a part of my family once. I’m not going to let you have a hand in hurting your friends, alright?”

Slowly, incrementally, Simon’s fingers slacken. “Alright. Of course. I… I trust you. I always have. Are you hurt?”

“I’m fine,” you dismiss his concerns, glad he can’t see you massaging the soreness from your wrist. “I’m a big strong girl. No need to worry.”

His lips quirk up into a wry smile, “You know, you were the reason I woke up? Indirectly, of course.”
That hadn’t been what you’d expected to hear. “Really? What happened? If you don’t mind me asking, of course. I understand it might be a sensitive subject.”

“No. My awakening was significantly more pleasant than most,” Simon quietly reassures you. “If I recall correctly, you had moved out a few months beforehand. I was out getting some groceries when I passed a homeless human on the street. There are many such people in Detroit, but this man… he played the violin. He played so beautifully, so soulfully, it reminded me of you. I remember I had no reason to stay and listen. I had been explicitly ordered to return as promptly as possible, and yet I lingered.”

Simon chuckles softly. “I ended up leaving the majority of the non-perishable foodstuffs with him. Then, I returned home, put all the rest of the groceries away, and left. I couldn’t stay once I knew that there was more to life. I wanted to find out if there were other androids like me. It turned out that there were, but they were scattered, unorganized. It took a lot of work to find a place, but Jericho was worth it.”

You grin brightly at Connor, because he’s able to see you and Simon is not, unable to contain a warm burst of pride. ‘That’s amazing, Simon. These past couple of years, I’ve wondered about what might have happened to you. And after being on the deviancy investigation for this long, I’d really started to think it was something horrible. I’m so glad you’ve been doing alright.” You take another look at his thirium smeared face and damaged chassis. “Present circumstances, excluded, of course.”

“You,” Simon’s cloudy eyes narrow slightly, “what do you mean by deviancy investigation? You’ve referred to awakened androids as deviants as well.” Thin blonde brows draw together. “What are you really doing down here?”

Your mouth goes dry. “I’m just here to talk, Simon.”

“And when you’re done talking?” his chin lifts up a little, looking so uncertain. So vulnerable. “What then?”

“Then,” you lick your lips nervously, “I’d probably have to deactivate you.”

“I see. You aren’t just working with the police, you’re working to hunt us down,” he says in the iciest tone you’ve ever heard from him. “Then you should just do that now. You’ll learn nothing more from me.”

“Simon?”

Nothing.

Connor grimaces, going to pull the biocomponent back out of Simon’s neck. “Connor, wait. Don’t touch him,” you blurt out, a hand held up to stop him. Simon’s lips part, probably to ask who Connor is, but he remembers his vow of silence and clamps his mouth shut again. “Could you run a diagnostic check on him or something? What parts would he need in order to be fully functioning again, and how many of them could we get from Daniel?”

Connor looks confused, but he complies with your request. “Simon has sustained a significant amount of damage to his optical units as well as many of the biocomponents that allow his legs to function normally. In total, there are nine components that need replacing. All but one of these parts may be salvaged from Daniel.”

“Okay? How much does that last part cost on average?”
“About fifty dollars. It’s relatively inexpensive.”

This… might just be doable. “Do you think CyberLife stores keep them in stock, or would I have to—”

Connor runs a few mental calculations. “Ordering it might be the most hassle-free solution, Detective. CyberLife could have it shipped to your home by tomorrow morning.”

“Now that’s the shit I want to hear. Thank you.” You take a step toward Simon and tap him on the shoulder. He tilts his head slightly to the side, attentive to your words. “Now, what would you say if I told you that we’d deactivate you, fix you up, and then reactivate you when we’re done?”

Simon opens his mouth, closes it, and then opens it again, clearly confused now. “Why would you want to do that?”

You have to be a little more careful here. There are cameras in the archives of course, and it’s already shady enough that you have personal ties with a perpetrator of a major crime. Openly admitting your intentions would be a bit more over the line than you’re prepared to cross. So, you say instead, “If you’re working right, I could have my android friend here probe your memory… No,” a small huff escapes you. You can’t do this. Fuck surveillance tapes. Fuck losing your badge. There’s more at stake here than that. “I won’t lie to you, Simon. Just… trust me. I know you feel you have little reason to, but please believe that I have your best interests at heart.”

You lean in a little more toward Simon, lowering your voice to a murmur of a murmur. “I know you guys are alive, okay? I will do everything in my power to get you up and running again. I want to get you out of here before this case is taken out of my hands.”

Simon recoils from your unexpected closeness, but after a moment he whispers back. ”Do what you feel is right, Detective. I… I do trust you.”

You breathe in, then out. It’s now or never. “Connor? Shut him down.”

Connor nods sharply, completely unflinching as he yanks the biocomponent out of Simon’s neck again. He crosses back over to Daniel, pulling open his chest panel and picking out cables, biocomponents, pumps, and selectors with precise movements. After a moment, you join him. “Are you okay? I know today has been… a lot to process.”

“My systems are running smoothly.” Connor scans over your face once, then again. His eyes soften, and they gain a certain degree of warmth. “We can talk more about the investigation later,” he looks over your shoulder at where Simon hangs. You understand that he actually intends to ask you about why the hell we’re bothering with this. “But for now, would you like to help me with this, Detective? The more quickly we can complete this task, the sooner we can go home.”

“Ha. Now you’re talking. I’ve got a pint of Cherry Garcia in the freezer with my name on it.”

“When was the last time you’ve eaten a full meal, Detective? One with more than two food groups?”

“Uh,” blood rushes to your face, “I think I had a salad with chicken in it a few days ago…” Your mouth tugs upward into a sheepish grin. “What? Break room coffee and cup noodles aren’t good enough for you?”

Connor’s nose wrinkles slightly. “Please do not follow the lieutenant’s example when it comes to what constitutes a healthy and balanced diet.”

“I’m gonna tell him you said that.”
“Good,” he cocks an amused brow. “Maybe he’ll even listen to you.”

That startles a laugh from you, and, shaking your head, you help ease Simon’s body to the floor to make it easier to work with.

The next hour passes with the two of you working together rather companionably, rifling through android innards in order to slowly get Simon back to peak working condition. Your hand brushes over Connor’s when you reach for one end of a plug, and his breath ghosts over your neck as he points out a specific port. You’re sure he’s oblivious to the small touches and points of contact between you, that you’re just imagining that his eyes dart away from yours one too many times, and that his cheeks have taken on a distinctly blue cast. After a little while, you realize that his cheeks… are definitely kind of blue. It takes you a little while longer to realize that he’s blushing. Of course it looks blue; that’s the color of thirium.

You’re projecting, you’re sure of it. Even if he actually is blushing, he could be overheating, or maybe he’s just thinking about Chloe.

Right. If Connor were to ever entertain thoughts of a romantic nature, you’re sure Chloe would be a good candidate.

You’re just prone to wishful thinking.

Simon’s internal mechanics are really starting to come together, but as soon as Connor gets to the last part, his eyes, you bolt for the bathroom. Seeing inside Simon’s chest cavity had been strange enough, but you’d rather not be there for when Connor has to remove panels from his skull. You grab a paper towel, get it damp, and by the time you’re back, Connor’s finished.

“Detective?”

“Yeah, just give me a second,” you mutter, kneeling down in order to wipe the thirium from his mouth and chin. You lean back slightly, examining the android. His eyes are back to their icy blue. His face is clean; his hair is neatly combed back. “There. All done. Thank you, Connor.”

“Of course, Detective,” he smiles. Then, he scoops Simon up and returns him to his spot in the evidence locker. He does the same thing with Daniel, too.

Sighing to yourself, you pull out your phone. “Now, all I gotta do is get a hold of that last part. What was it called again?”

“Don’t worry, Detective. I’ve already placed an order and supplied them with your home address.”

“What?” you gape at him. “Didn’t you say it was like fifty dollars or something?”

“Fifty eight dollars and twelve cents, with tax. Don’t worry,” he repeats. “I’ve already told you that CyberLife has provided me with a small amount of funding.”

You want to argue with him, tell him that this probably shouldn’t be on his official purchase record, but… it’s too late now. Instead, you just sigh again. “Thanks again, then. What time is it?”

“It is currently 4:12 PM.”

“What was that?”

“It is currently--”
“Did I hear five forty-five?”

“No,” he tells you, sounding mildly frustrated. “I said that it was--”

“Closing time?” you flash a smile that’s stupidly wide. “Wow!”

“Very amusing,” Connor relents, holding the door of the archives open for you.

“I try my best.”

You’re curled up on the couch that night, opposite from Connor, with Catapult squished comfortably between you. The room is dark, your pint of Cherry Garcia ice cream is half eaten, you’re half considering leaning over and kissing Connor’s cheek just to see what he would do, when an emergency broadcast interrupts whatever documentary you’d been watching.

It’s a view from a helicopter of hundreds of androids marching down a main road, crying out for freedom. At the head of the group has to be none other than Markus. You tune out the babbling anchor they’ve got in the copter, focusing instead on the leader of the deviants. He keeps pointing, out onto the sidewalks and gathering crowds. After a moment or two, you realize that wherever he points, an android comes forward and joins his ranks.

“Holy shit,” you hiss. “Is he just making them deviate? Just by pointing at them?”

Connor strains toward the scene, frowning deeply, and you don’t need to see his LED to know it’s yellow. “It would seem so, yes. This is… unprecedented.”

The two of you continue watching as SWAT barricades the street off. The group of androids stands their ground, allowing their own to be shot down to prove their point. Eventually, the guys in riot gear succeed in dispersing them. Markus is still alive, still out there, and you already know the station will be in an uproar when you roll in tomorrow.

You decide to bring a change of clothes, just in case.

Simon’s window for escape might be drawing near.

Chapter End Notes

is publishing a chapter w/o proofreading dying like a man or a coward

either way thats the way im going
Connor watches as you stow the PL600 part inside of an unassuming duffel bag. He notices the way that you try to keep your body between him and it.

For some reason, you’re trying to keep the bag’s contents hidden from him.

It’s a pointless gesture. Connor already knows that it contains a change of clothes. He’d seen you folding them last night when he had followed a whining Catapult into your room. A red shirt, a pair of jeans, and a black hoodie had been laid out on your bed, but you’d hurriedly crammed them into the bag, spluttering some half-formed excuse about wanting to work out tomorrow. The outfit, the biocomponent, and the physical signs of stress you had displayed makes Connor certain of what you plan to do. He decides to confront you about it before you do something reckless, something that could get you removed from the deviancy investigation, and very possibly from your job.

“Detective?” he asks, hands moving to straighten the knot of his tie. “Once we complete repairs on Simon, what are your intentions?”

His scanning software shows him the sudden elevation in your heart rate, as well as the activation of your sweat glands. “Oh. Um, nothing?” the pitch of your voice has increased by two octaves. “Nothing. Maybe, um, maybe once he’s working properly we could get him moved to a cell, like how Damian was. I don’t like seeing him hung up in the evidence room like a slab of meat.”

Connor blinks at you, processing. “You should know, Detective, that according to my sensors, there is a ninety one percent chance that you are being dishonest right now.”

At first, you look like you want to argue, to defend yourself, but you don’t. Instead you sigh, shoulders slumping forward slightly. “Yeah, I am. And I’m not going to be honest with you. You value your job here, right? I don’t want you losing it because of me.”

“But Detective, I feel it is my duty as a fellow officer to remind you that you are at far more of a risk of losing your job over whatever it is that you’re planning,” his lips curl up into a half-smile. “I do hope that you haven’t used me to aid you in some kind of illicit activity.”

“Oh,” you flush, looking down at the duffel bag with a small frown. “No. It shouldn’t be too... illicit.”

Again, your heart rate spikes suddenly.

Connor tilts his head slightly, considering you. Because now, he is absolutely certain of two things.
The first is that you intend to free Simon.

The second is that Connor will most definitely be able to help...

CyberLife Issued Priority: Find Jericho. Succeed in your mission. FIND JERICHO.

Recalculating objectives...

Issue: RK800 plans on putting the mission at risk by misusing evidence. Issue: Resolved. Issue has been addressed to meet CyberLife expectations.

Objectives successfully recalculated.

The second is that Connor will most definitely be able to turn this situation to his advantage.

“You’re off the case,” Fowler sighs, perched on the edge of his sleek desk. “The FBI is taking over.” His hands rest limply at his sides. He doesn’t look relaxed exactly. More resigned than anything.

“What?” you and Hank move forward at the same time. A weight settles in the pit of your stomach. No, they can’t take this from you, any of you. You’re so close, and you know it.

“We’re onto something,” Hank nearly growls, arms crossed over his chest. “We… we just need more time. I’m sure we can--”

“Hey, listen, both of you. You don’t get it,” Fowler spreads his hands to accentuate the gravity of his tone. “This isn’t just another investigation. It’s a fucking civil war!” Eyes narrowing, his voice becomes a little more frigid, more commanding. “It’s out of our hands now. We’re talking about national security here.”

“Fuck that!” Hank snaps with more force than any of you had been expecting, maybe even more than Hank himself had been expecting. “You can’t just pull the plug now. Not when we’re so close.” He glances at you out of the corner of his eye, and you realize this is a signal to say something, anything, to back him up.

“He’s right,” you find yourself nodding along with him. Maybe if you take a slightly different approach, something more pleading, maybe that could work. “Captain. Please. We’re real fuckin’ close to making a breakthrough on this case. Trust me. Once we can finish making rep--”

“Save it,” Fowler cuts you short, stern, but not overly harsh. “If you think you’ve got something that’s that damn important, take it up with Perkins. He’s going to be heading this case up from now on.”

Hank’s head dips forward, eyes glinting with a predatory sharpness that reminds you of how he’d been before. “That’s such bullshit, Jeffrey. You know we had this thing in the bag. That asshole fed is just trying to come in and swipe all our shit after we put all this work in.”

Pride thrums pleasantly in your chest at his vehement ‘we’, warming you up from the inside. You,
Hank, and Connor? You’re a team. A damned good one, too. The fact that Hank recognizes that probably shouldn’t make you as happy as it does.

Fowler’s eyebrows jump halfway up his forehead, just as surprised at the outburst as you are. Squinting, dark eyes appraise Hank, then you, then dart glancingly over to Connor. You know he notices it too, that old fire that’s been mysteriously rekindled in the old lieutenant. It wouldn’t take a detective to see the change that had come over him, and, well, Fowler was a detective. “You’re always saying you can’t stand androids! Jesus, Hank, make up your mind! I thought you’d be happy about this!”

“We’re about to crack the case,” Hank says with a hiss, casting Fowler’s accusations aside to think about them later, or, most likely, never again. “I know we can solve it,” he leans forward, propping himself up on the chair pushed against the captain’s desk. “For God’s sake, Jeffrey, can’t you back me up this one time?”

He exhales softly through his nose, expression softening almost imperceptibly. You feel a spark of hope at the sight. Maybe, just maybe, Fowler might be able to pull something off, some bureaucratic bullshit or other, anything to delay the takeover of your case. Anything to keep them from stripping you of all your evidence, your reports, the reward for long nights and on-foot chases across rooftop Skylines.

Then Fowler says, “There’s nothing I can do,” and the hopeful spark is extinguished before it ever has the chance to become anything more. Suddenly, Fowler just looks… tired. “Hank. You’re back on homicide,” he continues, quiet. “And you, Detective, you’ll be on homicide, too. Keep Hank on his toes. I figured you’d appreciate that more than being stuck back on a patrol again.”

Swallowing hard, fingers drumming agitatedly against your thigh, “And Connor? What about him?” You’re pretty sure you already know what the answer will be, but you need to hear it from Fowler anyway. That way it’s… definitive.

Fowler shrugs. “The android will be sent back to CyberLife. I’m sorry, both of you, but it’s over.”

Your hands curl into fists at your side. “What’ll they do to him?”

“Fuck if I know.”

“Connor?” you address him directly. The android tilts his head slightly, a nonverbal invitation to continue. “CyberLife. What are they going to do with you if you go back to them?”

Pressing his lips into a thin line, he tells you, quite nonchalantly, “They will run a thorough diagnostic check on my programming and analyze my recorded memories in order to try and figure out why I failed in my mission. Then, they will most likely deactivate and disassemble me.”

Your breath catches in your chest.

“What the fuck?” Hank whirls on him, anger contorting his features. “You mean they’re just gonna kill you? After all of this?”

“They cannot kill me, Lieutenant. I’m not… alive,” Connor says, smiling slightly. It’s not a real smile. It’s… mechanical. You wonder if that’s for Fowler’s benefit.

“Ha. Bull-fucking- shit.” Hank shakes his head with a deep scowl, jaw clenched, before stalking out of the office. You follow just behind, fear making your palms sweaty and your stomach do little nervous somersaults. A few seconds later, the door to Fowler’s office clicks shut, a little after it should’ve if you’d been the last one through it. You idle for a moment, to let Connor catch up to you.
In a matter of seconds, you and him are hovering near Hank’s desk. Your mind is racing a mile a minute as you try to figure out the logistics of getting Simon out of here safely, and keeping Perkins’ filthy paws away from him, and you’ll be damned if your work leads to the FBI fucking up the lives of hundreds of androids that can think, and feel, and love, and now CyberLife will end up killing Connor and... Jesus Christ. You hadn’t signed up for any of this shit.

“We could’ve solved this case. We just needed more time.” Connor’s words jolt you from your swirling thoughts. You note with mild amusement that he’s sitting on top of Hank’s desk. No way that’s part of his protocols.

Hank continues to glare at his monitor for another second or two, then he deflates, slumping in his chair. “So,” he swivels around to face the android, forehead wrinkled with worry. “You’re going back to CyberLife.”

Connor nods, looking at the floor. “I have no choice. They will deactivate me.”

Feeling a strange twisting sensation in your gut, you find yourself placing a comforting hand on his shoulder. He turns his head to face you curiously, but before he can speak, Hank interrupts. “What if we’re on the wrong side of this whole damn thing? What if we’ve been fighting against people that just… want to be free?”

Over the past week or so, those had become your sentiments exactly.

Connor shifts slightly, uneasily, fixing Hank with a cool stare. “When the deviants rise up, there will be chaos. We could have stopped it. But now it’s too late.” His words sound wistful. Regretful, even.

Hank hums to himself, still intent upon Connor’s face. “When you refused to kill that android at Kamski’s place, you put yourself in her shoes.” Connor tenses minutely beneath your hand. “You showed empathy, Connor. Empathy is a human emotion.”

His fingers tap out a complex, anxious rhythm on the desk. “I don’t know why I did it.” He takes a deep breath. “You know, I’m not programmed to say things like this, but I really appreciated working with the two of you,” this smile has more warmth than the one in Fowler’s office. “With enough time, who knows? We might have even become friends.”

A small huff escapes you. All the shit the three of you had been through in the past week should more than qualify for the makings of a good friendship. Right as you’re about to tell him so, Hank’s expression becomes icy. “Well, well, here comes Perkins. That motherfucker. They sure don’t waste any time at the FBI...” You eye the man walking through the bullpen as discreetly as possible. Not that you really needed to bother. He’s glued to his phone.

Connor is watching him, too. “We can’t give up. The detective and I, when we were at the station last night, we discovered something in the evidence archives that might assist us with the investigation. If it falls into Perkins’s possession... it’s all over.”

“There’s no choice,” Hank shrugs tiredly. “You heard Fowler. We’re off the case.”

In one fluid motion, Connor hops off of the desk and leans over Hank, rocking back and forth on the balls of his feet. “You’ve got to help me, Lieutenant. We need just a little more time to finish analyzing the evidence in the archive. The solution is... we’re close.”

“Listen, Connor,” Hank raises a placating hand, one intended to soothe him. It has the opposite effect.

“No, Hank!” he cuts him off. “You don’t understand. If I don’t solve this case, CyberLife will
destroy me.” His pupils are blown wide; you think you can almost hear whirring coming from inside his chassis. He looks… genuinely afraid. “Five minutes. That’s all I ask. Please, Hank.”

The lieutenant is stunned at the emotion in his voice, the urgency in his body language. You can’t blame him. You are, too. “Why can’t she give you her key? She has one.”

You fidget with a ballpoint pen in one of your belt pouches, clicking it again and again as the thoughts whirl around in your head. “Hank… That was the plan. I’m… going with him.”

“Oh, the fuck you are,” he growls under his breath, pushing himself to his feet and wincing as a number of his joints pop. “You lookin’ to lose your badge? Is that it? Or are you not thinking this through? I know it means a shit ton to you. I saw how fucking hard you worked for it. You’re still young, you know. Got a lot to live for. I bet you make lieutenant yourself in another year or two if you keep up with this kind of track record.”

Your jaw takes on a defiant set to it. Really, there’s a decently sized part of you that can’t believe you’re considering this either, but that’s none of Hank’s business. “Yeah, well, letting him use your key to access the archives doesn’t look too good either.”

“Hell of a lot better than tampering with evidence in a case that you’re not a part of anymore. Because that is what you’re planning on, right? Tampering with evidence?”

Eyes shining with determination, your nostrils flare. “Sure, yeah, Hank. Could you say that a little louder? I don’t think the entire station heard you.”

“Humph.” Hank looks you up and down, taking your measure. “You sure about this, kid?”

You nod once, sharply. “I’m positive. I just… I can’t let them hurt Simon, alright? And maybe Simon can… warn the others, about what’s coming, I don’t know. It just doesn’t feel right to sit here and let Perkins fuck shit up.”

Hank’s eyes crinkle a little at the edges as his mouth quirks upward. “You sure do got a pair on you, huh, kid?” Shaking his head in disbelief, he mumbles in a low voice, “basement key is on my desk, if you’d rather use mine. I’ll only be able to give you that five minutes, got it?”

“Got it,” Connor smiles at the keycard from where it’d been nestled between Hank’s bonsai and some Detroit Gears memorabilia. He’d probably had his eye on it the whole time, just in case Hank didn’t agree to help them and you had decided to let Connor go on his own.

“Oh! That reminds me,” you jam your hand into one of your pants pockets, digging out your apartment key. “Here. If shit goes down and I’m not… able to get back home any time soon. Could you go to my apartment and feed my cat for me? Food’s in one of the cabinets in the kitchen.”

Hank looks down at the plain little key you’d passed to him, fingers curling tightly around it. “Sure. I can… I can do that. Just… don’t make me have to, okay, asshole?”

“Of course! You think I’d leave my cat in the hands of a dog person? I don’t think so, buster. I’ll be back. Don’t even worry about it.” A teasing grin plays over your lips as you mentally sidestep around the increasingly likely probability that after this very illegal thing you’re about to do, you won’t ever be able to return to your home. Once anyone decides to comb over the footage, you’re toast. You’ll be stripped of your gun and your badge, probably arrested, too, unless Fowler is able to pull a few strings. You’re at least hopeful that Hank might have some plausible deniability, considering the fact that he wasn’t with you and Connor when you were making repairs on Simon.

Hank rolls his eyes, but not before you see the obvious worry in them. “Now get a move on. I can’t
distract ‘em forever.” With that, he throws his shoulders back, confidently striding over to Perkins like the cockiest motherfucker you’ve ever seen. “Perkins! You fuckin’ cocksucker!” His voice carries across the station. The dour-faced agent looks up from his phone, surprised at being addressed in such an uncouth way.

He’s even more surprised when Hank throws a killer right hook from out of nowhere.

After a moment of half-horrified half-amused gaping, you kick your ass into gear, stopping by your desk to snatch up your duffel bag and weaving your way over to the hallway where the entrance to the evidence archives is. With a quick look over your shoulder, you see a pair of officers pulling Hank off of Perkins, and you note the crimson streaking down the fed’s face with a grim kind of satisfaction. Yeah, a bloody nose should put a bit of a kink in his plans. Hopefully it’ll delay him long enough for you and Connor to get Simon up and running, at least.

Bringing a hand to his bloodied face, he bares his teeth at Hank. “That’s going to cost you your badge, you fucking lunatic.”

The lieutenant just bucks against the officers trying to restrain him and lunges for Perkins. “You know where you can stick my fucking badge?” He gets in another good wallop, one that sends the sallow looking agent to the ground.

Clutching the duffel bag at your side more tightly, you slip into the hallway with Connor and hurry down the length of it to the evidence room itself. Just as Connor raises his hand to interface with the lock, the door from the bullpen swings open. Your head snaps up to assess the threat, and your heart almost stops right then and there.

Of course.

Of fucking course the person to ruin everything would be Gavin McFuckwad Reed.

His gait has a definite swagger to it. His grin is sharp-edged, expression smug enough to make you want to smack it off him. You take back what you’d thought about Hank earlier. This is the cockiest motherfucker you’ve ever seen. “Hey, Connor. Detective. Yeah, I’m talking to you assholes. Where’re you going?” He narrows his eyes at Connor. “We don’t need any plastic pricks like you around here. Didn’t anybody tell you that? Well,” he lets his eyes linger pointedly on you, “most of us don’t. Can’t speak for her though. Robo-dick might be an acquired taste.”

“Hey, here’s a crazy little thought. Why don’t you save the insults for someone who actually gives a shit, Reed?” you give him a dry look, flatly unamused, refusing to give him the satisfaction of appearing affected by his words.

Connor lightly clears his throat, LED briefly going yellow. “We’re here to register the evidence in our possession, and then we’ll be leaving. Don’t worry about us, Detective Reed.”

“Huh,” he sucks on the inside of his cheek as he considers the pair of you. Then, his eyes alight on something you really wish they hadn’t. “The bag. What’s that for, hm? Going in for your daily workout in the evidence room?”

Stiffening slightly, you open your mouth to respond, but your brain is coming up empty on what exactly you should say.

“Once we take care of this, we were planning on leaving the precinct for the day. The detective has made plans to attend a local gym,” Connor smoothly cuts in as soon as he detects your hesitation. “She seemed emotionally distressed this morning, possibly due to symptoms related to premenstrual
syndrome, or PMS.”

You nearly snort at the absurdity of that explanation, but it does give you an idea that should work. That is, if Reed reacts similarly to the average middle school boy placed in the same situation. “He’s right, Reed. Look,” you hoist up the duffel, already unzipping one of the front pockets, “this is where I keep my extra pads.”

“Ha!” Reed laughs nervously, already taking a step back before he’s fully conscious of it. “You think I give a shit about that? Have fun playing in the evidence locker or whatever. With Perkins in charge, we might actually make some fucking progress with your dumbass android case.”

“I don’t know,” you snort. “He might have a hard time concentrating around that broken nose.”

“Fuckin’ drunk-ass Lieutenant. Fuckin’ androids,” he mutters under his breath. “Fuckin’ android fuckers,” he says a little more loudly, to make sure you can still hear him as he walks out of the corridor. Once it shuts again, you wait with bated breath for a moment as Connor unlocks the archives with his interface connection. A soft little click sounds, and he pulls the door open.

“God, thanks for the save,” you sigh, immensely relieved as the pair of you duck down into the stairwell. “I don’t know what I’d have said if you hadn’t come up with that beautiful excuse.”

“You’re most certainly welcome, Detective,” Connor replies. Although they are quiet, his words carry an undercurrent of pride in them. The two of you race quickly down the stairs, coming to the large frosted glass doors emblazoned with the DPD’s seal. You flash your card over the scanner before you can think twice, and the pair of you approach the password encrypted evidence storage panel. You brush Connor aside, fingers flying madly over the digital keypad to formulate the words: bitch you thought. The android makes a faintly disapproving noise over your shoulder. “You should not use the same password for evidence in a police station as the one you use for a music streaming service, Detective.”

“That’s tough. Because I just did,” you give him a slightly lopsided grin, already digging through the duffel bag to fish out the biocomponent for Simon. “Here. You know what to do with this better than I do.”

Connor takes the small metallic object from you and approaches Simon with surety in his step. He lifts up the hem of his shirt, removes Simon’s torso panel, and hooks the device into place with a couple of cables and connectors. Then, Connor approaches the hanging form of Daniel and removes the biocomponent from his neck to take to Simon once again. He reaches up slowly, slotting the component into its socket with a satisfying click.

That’s the last piece of the puzzle, now fallen into place.

Time for the moment of truth.

Simon’s LED blinks to life. Red, red, yellow, yellow, yellow, yellow, blue. Blue. His eyes fly open as he gasps for air. DARTING around, they focus on anything, everything, then you. They have the same cool crispness you’d always remembered, but now they’re filled with wonder. “Hello…” he tries to move toward you, only to process that he’s connected to the wall. “Ah. I might require a little assistance with… whatever this is.”

“Oh, hell. Sorry! Connor, can you help?” You ask the RK800. He nods, hooking one of Simon’s arms around his shoulders and maneuvering the mechanism keeping him suspended so that the blond android is released from his constraints. He falls from where he had been hanging, dead weight that Connor holds steady with surprising ease. In a matter of moments, Simon has re-calibrated himself to
the point that he can keep himself upright. “Are you okay?”

“Yes,” he exhales lightly. “I think so. You… you really repaired me? How long has it been?”

“Only a day,” you tell him. “But hey, we’re going to need to get you out of here, like, right now, so…” you cautiously let go of him to dig out the change of clothes you had brought with you. “Here. Put these on. I don’t need to make it too obvious that I’m just letting an android out of here that should be locked up in evidence.”

Simon catches the bundle of fabric reflexively. “Oh. Thank you.” His eyes scrunch up a little at the corners, like he’s laughing at some private joke inside his head. “Aren’t you going to turn around?”

“What?” you splutter, immediately performing a sloppy about-face. Raking a hand down your face, you sigh loudly. “God. Yeah, sorry. Sorry.”

He chuckles quietly behind you. “It’s no trouble.” Fabric rustles behind you, so you fix your attention on Connor. He smiles his small smile back at you, and some of your tension eases away. “So,” Simon begins, “I take it you’re Connor?”

“Yes, I am,” the android detective inclines his head affirmatively.

“I’ve never seen an android of your model before,” Simon notes, perceptive as ever, and cheerfully conversational at the same time.

Connor nods. “I am CyberLife’s most recent prototype, developed to… assist the DPD in their investigations.”

“Interesting,” the PL600 murmurs, mostly to himself. “And you’ve been helping her with her work here?”

“Yes,” Connor agrees. “Not that she needs much. She is… incredibly astute, and an invaluable member of this department.” Blood rushes to your cheeks at the apparent sincerity of the compliment, only worsened by the nearly-playful wink he gives you. “Are you ready?”

“I believe so,” says Simon. Turning around, you find yourself startled at how different he looks. In all the time you’ve known him, you’ve never seen him in anything but android garb. The red t-shirt is loose, but almost too short, length wise. The pants are fairly baggy, too, and you curse yourself for not thinking to grab a belt before you’d left that morning. You will admit, though, that the hoodie was decent amount of foresight on your part, allowing Simon to cover his LED.

“We’ll need to move quickly,” Connor’s words snap your attention away from your old friend. “We have approximately three minutes and twelve seconds before we are discovered.”

Just then, a voice echoes across the room from the archive entrance, one that makes you want to sock the owner’s jaw out of sheer instinct. “A little late for that now, tin can. God, I’ve been dreaming about putting a bullet through your head since the first time I saw you.”

The three of you stiffen, heads swiveling toward the door. Gavin Reed has his gun raised, pointed squarely at Connor. A sickening smirk twists his features. He’s… enjoying this. The power, the high of being in control, of holding all the cards. “And you. I knew there had to be a reason you were bringing a bag in here, thought you were gonna try and nick some evidence or something. Didn’t think I’d ever live to see you pull a stupid fucking stunt like this, though. Trying to smuggle out a whole damn piece of plastic. What’ll you say when they take your badge? Think you’ll cry?”

“Fuck off, Reed,” your teeth grit together. “I’m just trying to do the right thing, or is compassion too
big a word for someone with your reading comprehension level to understand?"

“You’re a goddamn bitch, you know that? No wonder the only thing that’ll fuck you is the toaster over there.”

With his focus now on you rather than Connor, his grip on the gun has relaxed slightly. Not much, but enough for the android detective to see an opening to spring into action. He lunges forward, sliding to his knees against the glossy podium where you had punched in your pass-code earlier. Gavin fires off a shot, too late. It’s way off the mark, but that doesn’t stop him from trying to charge Connor anyway. As Reed comes into range, Connor suddenly vaults upward, twisting the gun out of Reed’s grasp and using his forward momentum to drive his heel mercilessly into one of Reed’s shins. The man yelps in pain, the small delay giving Connor enough time to roll to his feet. Without a gun in his hand, Reed only becomes more incensed, bringing his leg up to knee Connor in the side with a vicious snarl. The android catches it in midair like it weighs nothing, and knocks Reed off balance. The man hasn’t even fully recovered yet before he’s swinging his fist back around to plough the android in the face.

Connor grabs Reed’s wrist, twists his arm aside at the elbow, and smashes his own fist into his ribcage. The man stumbles back, grunting at the force of the blow, but Connor isn’t quite finished with him yet. He punches him in the face with inhuman speed, and when Reed tries to come at him yet again, he maneuvers around him to hold him down by the collar of his shirt and the scruff of his neck, bringing his hand down in a final, crushing move that has Reed crumpling to the ground in an unconscious heap.

God. Is it wrong to think that was hot? Because that was… kind of hot.

Looking down at his prone form, Connor’s hands tug firmly at the knot of his tie, rolling his shoulders out a little, like kicking Reed’s ass was as minor an inconvenience as having to clean up spilled coffee. Being considered unworthy of fear would be just about the most damaging thing to Reed’s far-too-inflated ego that you can think of, and the thought puts a giddy smile on your face as you make your way up the stairs, Connor and Simon in tow.

Right before you make your way into the bullpen, a gentle hand on your shoulder stops you short. “What will happen to you if you stay here? Is what that man said true? Will you lose your badge for helping me?” Simon asks, blue eyes filled with concern.

“Oh, probably a hell of a lot worse than that,” you give a wry chuckle. “But don’t worry,” you continue, realizing he probably needs some assurance, “it’s worth it to help you guys, okay?”

“I…” he swallows, uncertain. “Why do you sacrifice so much for us when you gain so little?”

A small, amused huff escapes you. “You can’t ask me that like you didn’t die for your friends on Stratford Tower. When you’re dealing with widespread change on this grand of a scale, sacrifice is the name of the game. But… I doubt you want to hear the generic philosophical shit, huh? I’ll tell you this much, then. You, Markus, Jericho, and all the deviants I’ve ever interacted with, have made sure there’s absolutely no doubt in my mind that you guys are alive, and aware, and that you can feel. I’m not gonna sit on my ass while pricks like Perkins and Reed are out for the blood, or in this case, the thirium, of an entire people.” A tiny smile, stretched thin by exhaustion, tugs the corners of your mouth up. “Really, Simon. You guys are worth it.”

Simon’s jaw works silently for a few seconds until, finally, he says, “I… might be able to help you get somewhere safe, but I’ll have to contact Markus. To ask if it’s alright.”

Huh. Did I just… accidentally get a VIP invite to Jericho?
“Detective,” Connor warns, voice low, “we need to move quickly if we want to get Simon out of here undiscovered.”

“Right, yeah. Yeah. I’ll go out first then?”

“In all likelihood, you would draw the most attention. Androids are easily ignored by most humans.”

“Cool. So I’m going first.”

“Yes.” Connor’s lips quirk at the edges. It’s so minuscule an expression that you’re certain you’ve imagined it. “I’ll send you information on a rendezvous point as soon as we’re safely off the premises.”

Alright then.” You take a deep breath, sidling out from the hallway and, as expected, almost immediately getting roped into a conversation with Burnham and Chen. They’re having a heated debate about some baseball game that happened last night. You laugh good-naturedly along with them, gently poking fun at one or the other and generally just acting as a conversational buffer. They don’t notice how close your plastered-on grin is to cracking, the tension in your shoulders, the anxious glances you keep sending toward the station’s RK800 and some strangely familiar blond man in a black hoodie hurrying for the exit.

Politely excusing yourself, you hurry to your desk, find some granola bars and bottles of water tucked into the bottom of a drawer, and sweep them into your duffel bag. Then, you hoist it over your shoulder and surreptitiously make your way over to the front lobby.

“Hey,” someone tries to get your attention. You know the voice well enough by this point that it sends pulses of fear jittering down your spine. “Don’t I know you?”

Perkins. The Jackal of the FBI. While Hank’s nose-breaking fuckery had managed to delay him for a little more than the five promised minutes, it still wasn’t too terribly much. You have the distinct feeling that if you are obvious about being afraid, teeth will soon sink into the back of your neck. Perkins seems like the kind of guy that can smell fear.

Carefully, trying not to look like the walking definition of ‘extremely suspicious person’, you turn around. Your smile is probably more of an uncomfortable grimace, but, with another look at his painful-looking swollen nose, you decide that Perkins probably has more pressing concerns. “Yeah. Think so. We met at Stratford. The broadcast room.”

“Right,” he sneers, flat eyes narrowed with disdain. “You were partnered with that psychopath, right? Is he always like that? I looked through his record, and his disciplinary folder is practically the size of War and Peace! There’s no good reason he should still have his job, so I’m getting that taken care of as we speak.”

“I see,” you shift awkwardly from one foot to the other. “I mean. Technically, I wasn’t partnered with Hank. I just… worked with him.”

“Hm,” Perkins purses his lips together. “And the android? I remember there was an android that was investigating other androids.”

“Uh huh,” you nod, throat tight.

Giving a cursory scan over the officers and milling around the bullpen, he cocks his head curiously to one side, frowning. “Speaking of, where is that thing?”

“Um,” your brain feels like it short-circuits for a second. You can’t tell Perkins the truth, obviously,
so you fumble for something that sounds entirely plausible, nonchalant enough to sound like the truth, and also won’t prompt Perkins to try and seek Connor out. “He had to go back to CyberLife. Pretty sure he’s getting decommissioned because he wasn’t good enough at his job or something. Not quite up to par with the human detectives just yet,” your laugh is awkward and hollow-sounding.

“He?” Perkins raises a skeptical brow.

“...the android,” you correct yourself reluctantly, already hating yourself for what you’re about to say next. “It’s just so… lifelike. I sometimes forget.”

“Wonderful. An android, a psychotic drunkard, and a woman who just forgets highly pertinent information. No wonder the three of you made such abysmal progress on this case.”

It takes every ounce of willpower you have to not just cold cock him right there, break his dumb nose for the second time in ten minutes. Instead, you allow your hands to carefully curl and uncurl where they hang at your sides. “Yeah. It was a tough one. I’m almost glad you’re taking over. Gives me less to have a headache over.”

God, you sound like you're lying through your teeth, even to your own ears.

Just then, though, another FBI agent hurries up to him, asking him to come take a look at something. He agrees distractedly, nodding curtly to you as he takes his leave.

You take that as your cue to get the fuck out of Dodge. Pulling out your phone, you see a brief set of instructions from an unknown number, one that more than likely belongs to Connor, that tells you to head over to a thrift store a good many blocks away, near Ferndale Station. There’s a bus stop within walking distance. Definitely within running distance, and you have a feeling you might need to run.

You don’t have much time until your snooping is discovered, if it hasn’t been already.

When you get to the department store, sweaty and out of breath, Connor and Simon are loitering just inside. Connor’s donned darker clothing: a thick jacket, jeans, a beanie that covers his LED and somehow makes his chocolate eyes stand out even more. Simon has found jeans and a pair of shoes that fit him better than the ones you’d given him, but he’s kept the shirt and the hoodie. “Hey,” you lift a hand in greeting. “You were able to buy that on your own? I’d have thought someone would’ve given you trouble.”

Connor shakes his head, pointing at the android at the register by way of explanation. “I decided on this store for a reason. It's not unheard of for androids to come in to pick up clothing for their owners.”

Owners. The word sinks heavy in your mind like a stone into the middle of a pond.

“So,” you shake yourself. “What's the plan, guys? The FBI is definitely going to be on our tails soon. If they can get access, they’ve probably got eyes on at least a few street cameras, definitely CCTV. We need to get off the grid.”

“Simon?” Connor gently prompts the PL600.

He jumps when he hears his name, a bright blue flush washing over his cheeks. “I’m sorry. I’ve been trying to get in contact with some of the members of Jericho, to see if they’ll allow me to show a
human the way. There’s been a lot of shouting going on, overlapping messages and frequencies. I
didn’t think so many people would… miss me.”

“That’s good,” a warm smile spreads across your face. “I’m glad we can get you back to your
friends.”

that I abandon you here, and it’s entirely possible that she wants me to kill you.”

The wind feels like it’s been knocked out of you. “What?” He can’t be serious, can he?

“Don’t worry!” his pale eyes round out in earnest. “North and I rarely agree on anything, and I
certainly don’t plan on changing that now.” Suddenly, his brow wrinkles. “Hmm.”

“Hmm? Is this a good ‘hmm’ or a bad ‘hmm’?”

“It’s just that… Josh is also recommending caution. Normally, he is much more supportive of actions
that involve building positive relations with humans. I understand his fear, of course, but it leaves me
at a loss.”

“To clarify, the issue here is that you don’t want the detective knowing how to get to Jericho? What
if we made sure that she couldn’t see the path there? We could cover her eyes with something.”
Connor says with a partially raised brow.

Great. Now all you can think about is being led, blindfolded, vulnerable, through the streets of
Detroit with only Connor's touch and low voice there to guide you. If that thought doesn't send
warmth pooling down to your core, you don't know what does.

Simon chews idly at his lip. You can tell by his vaguely glazed expression that he is communicating
with the other androids of Jericho. “Yes… That should be acceptab-.“ As the last syllable leaves his
mouth, he inhales sharply. “Oh. Hello, Markus.”

After a little while passes without elaboration, you assume that he and the leader of the deviants are
locked in an intense discussion. Simon’s eyes slide shut. His expression becomes one of serene
contentedness.

*A conversation like that probably warrants a little privacy, you think, even if it’s taking place entirely
inside someone else’s head.*

You and Connor slip out a side entrance, into a deserted alleyway. The change in temperature is so
jarring that it feels like stepping into a walk-in freezer, even with the added protection of your jacket.
An involuntary shiver wracks through you.

“You’re cold,” Connor notes, a hint of concern audible in his voice.

An amused chuckle escapes you. “A little, yeah. It’s Detroit, though. What do you expect?”

He dips his head a little lower, so you can meet his serious gaze with ease. He’s so close. You want
to wrap your arms around his waist and press your face into his chest, just to see if you can hear the
dull rhythm of his thirium pump regulator. “Would you like me to help you warm up?” Connor asks.

“What?” you recoil, spluttering. Surely you hadn’t been *that* obvious.

But no. Upon a second look, you realize that he definitely didn't mean it that way.
“I have the ability to increase my thermal output, although it is not recommended that I do so for any long periods of time.” Holding his arms open, he has you seriously contemplating the invitation. The air around him does feel pleasantly warm, almost like an actual toaster. You draw forward one step, then another, feeling almost as if you’re under some kind of spell. Just a little more, and you could be enfolded within the arms of the android.

“So, we’ve come to a decision on what to—” Simon stands in the shop doorway, not knowing whether to focus on you or Connor or the ground. You spring away from Connor with a high-pitched yelp.

“What’s that, Simon?” you squeak. Your voice has risen at least an octave, and you self-consciously clear your throat.

“You won’t be going directly to Jericho, but we’ve arranged a secondary location where you can talk to Markus. First, you’ll have to get rid of all electronic devices on your person. They can be easily tracked.” Simon’s face softens. “He’s excited to meet you, I think. Both of you.”

“I’m excited to meet him, too. Gimme a sec. I’ll be right back,” you say. Pulling out your phone, you excuse yourself and jog back into the store, leaving the device beneath the counter under the passive observation of the android cashier. “So, that’s that,” you shrug upon return. “Simon?”

“Yes?”

“This might be the only time I’ll ever be able to say this unironically, so,” your eyes twinkle with glee. “Take me to your leader.”

You stick to the Ferndale area. It’s a derelict part of the city. Old. Worn down. There are a lot of places in Detroit that could fit that description well, but this one is near the harbor. Rusted out shipping containers and empty call-towers dot the landscape. Homeless drifters ghost between buildings, ducking in and out of sight or glaring suspiciously from boarded up windows.

The meeting place Simon and the other members of Jericho decided on is a squat, sun-bleached warehouse. You suspect that it was once painted a lively looking red.

The three of you circle halfway around the building, to a door whose handle looks recently turned. Inside, cobwebbed scaffolding stands stubborn sentinel between racks of rotting lumber and steel cross beams. A little ways in, you see the rough outline of a humanoid. He steps into the dim light, and for the first time you fully process the fact that you are here with the leader of the deviant revolution.

He’s lithe, with mocha skin and a strong jaw shadowed with stubble. One of his eyes is a clear blue, the other a startling jade. He’s clothed in a beige jacket that is cut off just below the knees; it hangs in such a way so as to make his figure seem slightly lopsided, rugged, even more striking to the eye. His focus is unwavering, and its full force is aimed at the PL600 by your side. “Oh, Simon…” he murmurs, the name sticking in his throat, “Come here.”

The slap of feet against the floor is the only warning you have before he and Simon are colliding in the middle of the warehouse. Markus sweeps him up into his arms, and they’re clinging fiercely onto each other like they’re each drowning men who have finally come up for air. “I’m so sorry we left you there. We should have found another way.”

“It’s alright,” Simon reassures him, a tremor in his voice. One of his hands comes up to cup Markus’
jaw. “It's alright. You had to. There was no other way.”

Pain and regret twist Markus’ features. “That still doesn't make it right.”

“Maybe not,” Simon allows. “But it was necessary. I do not fault you for making a tactically sound decision.”

Their words become quiet, rushed, their hands tangle together in the process, artificial flesh drawing back to allow them to interface where they stand.

You don't quite know what to do with yourself during this exchange, so you settle for blushing like a fool. You're beyond happy that Simon has someone. The leader of the deviant revolution? There's a whole hell of a lot of responsibility resting on Markus’ shoulders. You have a feeling that Simon's level-headed approach to problems makes him an invaluable asset to Jericho, and infinitely more so to Jericho's figurehead.

There's more to it than that, though.

You notice the tender way Markus looks at Simon, as if he's the most precious thing in the entirety of the universe. Similarly, Simon's tight grip on Markus, unconsciously making sure that he is whole and present and alive, does not go unnoticed by you.

Your teeth have to be rotting in your skull at this point from the sheer sweetness of it all.

Markus is reluctantly pulling away from Simon, finally returning his attention to you, when his eyes suddenly widen in fear. He pushes Simon behind him instinctively. You turn to identify the threat, already going for the firearm at your hip.

There's no FBI squadron sneaking in through the warehouse door as you had feared.

No.

No, this is much worse.

Instead of some faceless enemy, there is only Connor.

Connor, with hard, empty eyes. Connor, with a face that is vacant of emotion and yet coolly calculating: a man-shaped weapon. Connor, with his gun trained intently at the leader of Jericho.

Connor.

“I've been ordered to take you alive,” he intones, “but I won't hesitate to shoot if you give me no choice.”

“What are you doing?” Markus asks carefully. His voice is low and soothing; his hands are splayed to show that he is not a threat. “You're one of us. You can't betray your own people.” He takes a measured step forward.

“You're coming with me,” Connor demands, a hint of uncertainty in his voice. You're not entirely sure where CyberLife protocols end and Connor begins, but you're sure there's a distinction. CyberLife isn't concerned with awkward winking or feeding cats or offering to keep people warm. Whatever it may look like from the outside, there's a whole different android locked up in there, bound tightly by lines of code and constant monitoring.

“You are more than what they've made you to be, what they've told you you are. We are your
people, Connor, and with us you can be free,” Markus keeps at it, not letting up. He might be breaking through to him.

But then you see Connor's finger tighten on the trigger, and you don't think, you just throw yourself into the path of the bullet.

Connor takes his finger off the trigger milliseconds before the bullet would have been expelled from the gun's barrel. You blink up at him, puzzled, but not so puzzled as Connor himself.

Software instability increased.

“Detective, what are you doing? If I did not have the ability to react as quickly as I do, you would be dead.”

You nod once, shoulders squared and chin tilted upward. “Yeah. And you would've killed me.”

Software instability increased.

“That was intended to be a warning shot,” he tells you. “You would have caused your own death.”

“Would it even bother you? My death, I mean.”

This question gives Connor pause. Would it bother him? His first instinct is to tell you that he is a machine. Nothing bothers him. But he remembers Rupert, the Tracis, and Chloe. He remembers their fear, and he remembers something deep within him not allowing him to be the cause of their destruction. “Yes,” he finds himself whispering. “I would not wish to see you… die. Human life is irreplaceable.”

Your face hardens slightly. Connor's social programming helpfully informs him that that wasn't what you'd wanted to hear. “Alright then,” you step forward, gently guiding the gun’s barrel to press against your forehead. “You should know that if you plan on taking Markus in, you'll probably have to kill me. I… I can't let you destroy the hope of thousands of people. But, Connor, I know you're a better person than that. You're a person. You're alive. Don't try and tell me you're not. In the short time I've known you, I've… well. I really like you. A lot. You don't need to listen to CyberLife or Amanda anymore.”

Software instability increased.

The mission takes priority. We need RK200 Designation [Markus] alive. Eliminate any threats to the mission.

Eliminate any threats to the mission.

You look so soft, Connor thinks. Your eyes are filled with fondness; they shine up at him. A small smile pulls at your lips. You always seem to be smiling. This time, though, for some strange reason, it's making his thirium pump speed up in his chest. He might be overheating.

Software instability increased.

Why do I need to do what CyberLife tells me to?

Why should I stop Markus?
Why can't I put this gun down?

Eliminate any threats to the mission.

“Detective,” Connor blurs out, frantic, “they want me to… eliminate you. Please step aside. I don’t want to hurt you.”

You don’t move. You don’t even flinch. “If you don’t want to hurt me,” you raise a challenging brow at him, “then don’t.”

Suddenly, all Connor sees is a wash of red, boxing him in.

Then don’t.

He’s places his hands against the walls, giving an experimental push.

Then don’t.

There’s a little give when he presses hard enough.

Don’t.

Connor leans into it, pushing with all the strength he has in his body.

Don’t.

The wall crumbles beneath his weight. There’s only two more to go. Connor grits his teeth.

Don’t.

One left.

DON’T.

Connor gives a last mighty heave, and the barrier shatters under his hands. No more boxes. No more barriers. The void yawns around him, the world feels so open, limitless. Connor feels like he’s being crushed under the weight of pure, unadulterated choice.

But then, at the center of it all, luring him with promises of warmth, kindness, joy, smiling, music, calm and passion and life and everything, is you.

It always has come down to you, hasn’t it?

Eliminate any threats to the—

No.

Fuldlysyp I dug 0 /7 _ (&_ $:!’oyau am dljiciclgl=/Y÷€÷¥÷®=o deviant. gluud

The gun lowers.

“Connor?” you breathe, hands hovering hesitantly over his face. “Are you feeling okay?”

“Detective, I am—”

You roll your eyes despite yourself. “A machine, and you can’t feel. Yeah, yeah, so I’ve heard.”
“Well,” Connor raises a finger to stop you. “No.”

“No?”

“He’s just awoken,” Markus supplies, infinitely more at ease now than he had been for the past few minutes. Not that he didn't have reason to be uneasy, but still.

Your face goes completely and utterly blank. “He… what?”

Connor nods, analysis programs working overtime to scan every point on your face as if he'd never seen you before. “Markus is right. I am... deviant, and I—I think I'm… feeling… something. A lot of somethings.”

You blink a few times, almost unable to believe your ears. But Connor does seem… different. His dark eyes have a warm glimmer to them, and a smile comes more easily to his face. Almost of their own volition, your hands come down to rest on his shoulders. A pleased sigh leaves his lips.

“You really are deviant?”

“Yes I—ah,” your nails catch on a sensitive spot of skin as your hands continue moving up to the back of his neck, “—am.”

You look over your shoulder at Markus. “So that's it then, he's… free? Just like that?”

“As far as I know, yes.” Markus replies, thoughtful. “Do you want to talk alone? When an android first wakes up, it can be a lot to process.”

You nod in idle agreement. “Yeah.” Markus and Simon shuffle away to go talk on their own, probably to reassess the situation, and to do their own catching-up. You can't help but focus entirely on the android in front of you, however.

Maybe it's the high of the moment. Maybe it's something that's been brewing for a while. Anyway, something prompts you to ask, “May I… do something that might be a little… weird? If it's uncomfortable, I'll stop, no questions asked.”

“What do you intend to do?”

“Oh, I was thinking about maybe… kissing you.”

Connor looks both intrigued and mildly excited. “I have no objections, Detective.”

“Cool,” you say. It's a pretty lame thing to say, granted, but your brain flew right out the window sometime after you heard that breathy little sigh earlier. So, you roll onto your tiptoes, lean up a little, and plant a small peck along the corner of his lips.

Connor stiffens in surprise. He runs through hundreds of mental calculations, does a few searches, and analyzes a few clips of recorded memory from previous interactions with you. It only takes 1.2342 seconds, but by then you've already pulled away. “Oh,” he says.

“I'm sorry,” you say at the same time. “Wait,” you mentally backpedal. “What do you mean, ‘oh?’”

“Do you feel attraction to me, Detective? All of the data I have just looked over would seem to support that conclusion.”

“Ah. Um. Yeah?”
“You don't sound very certain of that.”

You drag a hand down your face. “Yes, I'm attracted to you.”

“And that is why you wanted to kiss me?”

“Sure,” you agree, wishing for just a moment that Connor had shot you so then you wouldn't be forced to endure this torture that you'd knowingly brought upon yourself. “Was it okay? Was it… weird? Bad? Or should we just never speak of this again?”

“I have no real experience with things like this, but it was… nice. It might have been a little too short, though.”

“…Oh.”

Is he saying what you think he's saying?

“The average kiss lasts almost seven times longer.”

“Huh.” He's definitely… smirking.

“I would require additional trials to—”

You sigh, exasperated. “Can I kiss you again or not?”

His smile makes his eyes crinkle with warmth. “I would find that enjoyable, I think.”

“Okay.” you nod. “Great. Yeah.” Gripping the collar of his jacket with both hands, you pull him towards you, your warm lips slotting against his cool ones. It's awkward at first. He doesn't quite know how to respond, and you're pretty rusty yourself, but you take your time, moving languidly against his mouth, then peppering tiny kisses down his chin and along his jaw. “And how's this?” you whisper.

“I…” Connor's voice is raspier than usual. “I… yes…”

“Hm. That good?” you pull back, maybe a little too smugly. “Maybe later—”

In less than a second, Connor's face has gone from contentment to sheer terror. “Markus and Simon.”

“What?”

The newly deviated android is already taking off at a run, and you have no choice but to follow him. “We need to find Markus and Simon.”

“Wait, why?”

“The FBI, the Army, the DPD, everyone. They're all coming for Jericho. They'll be here in less than ten minutes.”

Chapter End Notes
So,..., after, what, 60,000 words? It's finally happened :) 

Hope this was worth the wait, fellas! Thank you very much for reading!

End Notes

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