Lessons Learned
by jesswess

Summary

When Lieutenant Hank Anderson is forced to work with an android detective to investigate deviant-related cases, he finds himself learning a few things about them along the way...

Whether he likes it or not.

(The story of Connor's journey to becoming deviant and Hank's change of heart about androids, all told in Hank's point of view.)

Notes

This has probably been done a million times already, but I wanted to provide my own take on
Hank's point of view of the peaceful android revolution + Connor slowly going deviant.

Note: This story follows the canon timeline and events, so it will have lines and scenes from the game--but there will occasionally be some small changes (like added/edited dialogue) as well as extra scenes that I thought would add more to certain parts of the story. Also, considering that this is Hank, there will be a LOT of swearing, even in his narration. You have been warned! ;)

Enjoy!
The first thing that Hank learned about androids was that they could be assholes.

It didn’t take advanced social programming for androids to know that 1) they didn’t go where they weren’t wanted, and 2) they didn’t refuse to follow their orders. But this one was a special breed—walking into a humans-only bar like it owned the place, singling Hank out to pursue a homicide case when he just wanted to drink and watch the game in peace, and ignoring his polite suggestion to fuck off.

“I’m sorry, Lieutenant, but I must insist,” the android stated. Its voice was more nuanced and not as monotone as other androids he’d heard, but it was still too matter-of-fact and with the slightest robotic tint, so Hank had already guessed it wasn’t human before it had the chance to utter two words. “My instructions stipulate that I have to accompany you.”

Saying it was sorry about insisting was a joke. This thing wasn't sorry at all.

Luckily, neither was Hank, who knew exactly how to respond. “You know where you can stick your instructions?”

“No,” it replied. “Where?”

God damn it.

Hank turned to glare at the android, only to find that it was a model he’d never seen before. In fact, it must have been one of the new ones CyberLife was touting to be more 'natural' than its perfect peers, as its features were less polished, with lines and freckles and other flaws that could easily be seen on any human. But all it took was that first glance before the rest gave it away: the ring of light on its temple, the suit and tie with all the android fixings, proper posture. It stuck out like a sore thumb against the background of the bar and its customers, and its voice certainly wasn't helping, either.

When it looked at him expectantly, waiting for an answer to its question, Hank muttered, “Never mind,” glancing back down at his drink.

He had better things to do than investigate a homicide involving androids. He hoped that if he ignored this android long enough, it would get the message and leave.

It didn't. Instead, it decided to piss him off some more by unexpectedly reaching over and plucking the glass out of his grip.

Hank froze.

Did it really just—

Wondering if he was fucking dreaming, he watched as the android unceremoniously spilled his drink onto the floor beside him, then set the empty glass upside down on the counter.

It tilted its head contentedly when it met his gaze. “I think we can go now.”

Hank had to be imagining the smug look he saw on this android's face, but it still made him see red. He practically fell off the barstool to snatch it by the front of its uniform and lift it off its feet, fully prepared to kick this thing’s ass. It seemed almost willing to let him, as it made no effort to resist, hanging loosely in his grasp.
“You little prick,” he spat. "I don’t know what’s stopping me from knocking you out!”

“Your sense of duty, Lieutenant, and the cost of repairs if you damage me,” the android stated, completely unaffected by his rage. "For your information, I’m worth a small fortune.”

Hank clenched his jaw, convinced that this was worth the dent in his savings, until weighing his options proved that it wasn’t. He bitterly dropped it back to its feet and turned to face Jimmy, who looked way too amused at the scene.

“Wonders of technology,” he huffed. “They can even program assholes these days.”

This asshole in particular obviously wasn’t going to leave, and Hank didn't doubt that it would just keep trying to ruin his night until he left with it, so he shuffled back over to the bar, fishing for his wallet.

“Gotta go.” He threw his cash onto the counter. “Duty calls.”

He made sure to shoot the android a glare as he turned to leave. He could have sworn it looked pleased with itself, but he knew better than to believe it had the capability.

He stormed over to the exit, only to halt in the doorway at the sight of pouring rain. Swearing under his breath, he grudgingly forced himself into it, wishing he'd taken an umbrella.

This night just kept getting better and better. First a plastic asshole invaded his space and spilled his well-earned drink, then he had to go with said android to a crime scene in the freezing rain... The only possible bright side to this so far was that homicide cases were at least interesting to figure out—or they used to be, before every other case somehow involved Red Ice. Those were interesting, too, he supposed, but they were mostly predictable.

Also predictable: The android at his heels once again finding a way to annoy him. The second he arrived at the car and opened the driver's seat door, he heard its footsteps on the wet pavement stop just behind him.

“Lieutenant?”

"What," he grunted.

"It wouldn’t be wise for you to drive. Ingesting alcohol can impair your ability to do so, even in small amounts.”

“Hey, you were the one that thought picking me up at a bar was a good idea. If you didn’t want me to drive, you should’ve thought about that.”

“I assumed that you would let me drive, or that we would be taking a taxi due to your impairment.”

_You’re an android_, Hank thought sourly. _You shouldn’t be assuming anything._

“I’m not impaired,” was what he said instead. “I’m not even buzzed.”

The android hesitated, so Hank ignored its friendly suggestion and plopped into the driver’s seat, shutting the door in its face. He then rolled down the window just enough for it to hear him as it continued to stand there in the rain like an idiot.

“I’m sober enough to know that I didn’t let you come with me so you could lecture me,” he added. "So you can either get in the car, or you can walk there for all I care.”
“The crime scene is a few miles away. That would take me a while.”

“Then get in the car.”

Finally, the android listened.

“Jesus, I can’t believe this,” Hank murmured as it went around to the other side and gently opened the door.

Whose bright idea was it to give him an android? Everyone and their mother knew he hated working with the damn things. Mindless drones with legs who followed their owners around, silently doing the jobs that humans were too lazy to do themselves...

Well, maybe not silently, at least not in this android's case. This one couldn't seem to shut the hell up.

The android sat in the passenger seat and moved to close the door. That door was always stubborn, so it had to pull at it a few times before it shut completely.

“All right... Where are we going? Um.” Hank faltered when he couldn't remember what to call this thing. "What was your name again?”

“Connor,” said the android. “Here is the address.”

The drive there was quiet. Mostly quiet, that is, until Hank realized he knew next to nothing about this homicide that Connor mentioned. He didn't have to know everything about a case before getting briefed at the scene, but he still liked to know at least the basics of what he was getting himself into... or, rather, was getting himself dragged into.

Knowing he would regret it, he broke the silence. "What do we know about this case?"

He hoped that Connor would keep its answer short and sweet. His head was already starting to pound.

"Not very much," it admitted. "Just that it was a homicide involving a CyberLife android."

"The android is the suspect?"

"Potentially."

Wonderful.

Stopping at a red light, Hank glanced over at the robot beside him to find it already staring back at him.

“So, why did CyberLife randomly decide to send over an android to help with investigations?” he asked. "Didn’t think humans were doing a good enough job?”

“The decision wasn’t random, and it wasn’t in response to the police department’s efforts. CyberLife simply believes that with the increased rates of criminal activity involving androids as of late, a helping hand would be beneficial to investigators in need of assistance.”

“Beneficial,” Hank echoed under his breath. “Well, thanks, but I think I can handle it on my own.”

“Okay.”

“So you can be a ‘helping hand’ by staying in the background and not doing anything. All right?
This is my domain.”

“Sure, Lieutenant.”

Hank wondered if androids were capable of sarcasm. This one certainly seemed to be—or at the very least, it had already decided that his opinion was bullshit.

He figured that talking to it any more was too much effort, so he decisively turned the volume of his music up. Connor didn’t move or startle like a human would have at the sudden roar of heavy metal, but it tilted its head like a curious dog, then looked over at Hank, who pretended not to notice.

It started to speak again, but the music drowned out its words. Hank hoped it would take that as a hint to shut its trap, but it only continued, a little louder.

Hank huffed and turned the music all the way down. “What?”

“You shouldn’t take your hands off the wheel while driving. Next time you wish to turn on some music, you can ask me to do so for you.”

“I’ll keep that in mind.” Hank reached over to turn the music back up anyway.

Connor said nothing, slowly sitting back in its seat.

After being stuck in the car with this android for what felt like forever, Hank finally arrived at the crime scene: a broken-down house surrounded by police lights and a sea of people, onlookers and officers alike.

Great. More people to talk to.

He parked just outside the gathered crowd and looked pointedly at Connor. “You wait here. I won’t be long.”

“My instructions are to accompany you to the crime scene, Lieutenant.”

This android was determined, he’d give it that.

“Listen... I don’t give a fuck about your instructions,” he hissed. "I told you to wait here, so you shut the fuck up, and you wait here.”

And then, of course, it didn’t.

When he heard the android guarding the police line tell another android that it wasn't allowed there, Hank knew immediately who it was talking to without having to look. The plastic asshole had disregarded the ”no androids allowed” rule at the bar, so he didn't doubt it would also be bold enough to attempt to cross a crime scene without being ordered to.

God. He was never gonna shake this thing, was he?

“It’s with me,” he called begrudgingly.

Connor walked over, looking at him with total innocence, as if it didn't just blatantly ignore his orders instead of obeying like androids were supposed to do.

“What part of ‘stay in the car’ didn’t you understand?” Hank asked coolly.

“Your order contradicted my instructions, Lieutenant.”
Its instructions again. Wasn’t it supposed to follow his instructions at this point? Wasn’t it assigned to him for this case? He hoped it was just for this case, anyway.

He figured there was no getting rid of it for now, so he conceded. “You don’t talk, you don’t touch anything, and you stay out of my way. Got it?”

“Got it.”

The scene was a much fouler one than he’d expected, even before going into the house. The stench of a dead body reeked through the open door, seeping into the rainy air outside. Hank had to breathe through his mouth while getting briefed, with Connor trailing just behind him, oddly unaffected, even though he was pretty sure androids had some sense of smell, too.

Carlos Ortiz, they said. Had to be dead for at least a couple of weeks, judging from the smell alone. He wasn't sure he wanted to see just how bad the guy looked at this stage, so he braced himself as he went inside.

The body was slumped against the wall, with flies and maggots and bloody stabs in every inch of his chest and stomach. The words I AM ALIVE were written in what was probably his own blood just above his head. Despite the crude choice of ink, the lettering was perfect.

*I am alive.* Carlos certainly wasn’t, and no human would ever say something like that in this case. It was clear that an android had written it, but it wasn't clear why, considering how very not-alive it actually was.

“What do we know about his android?” Hank asked.

“Not much,” said Ben into his clipboard. “The neighbors confirmed he had one, but it wasn’t here when we arrived.”

So, the android potentially stabbed this guy and ran away after writing the message. Why, if that really was the case? What made it malfunction so terribly that its first course of action was to stab its owner 20-something times?

He started to have an idea when he discovered a bag of Red Ice nearby.

Ah. "Seems our friend Carlos liked to party."

Fucking Red Ice. It was everywhere in spite of his best efforts, and it caused too many problems. Most people that took it got high as a kite, not caring about anything or anyone, letting disasters slip through their fingers. Others, for whatever reason, got belligerent and violent, making the disasters happen. Maybe Carlos here was one of those special few.

He decided to save his assumptions for later, stepping away from the drug-covered table to follow along a trail of bloody marks on the floor, where the murder weapon lay halfway through the path to the kitchen. There was what appeared to be a struggle of some sort leading into—or, rather, from—the kitchen, with knocked over chairs, bloody handprints on the walls and furniture, and a fallen baseball bat with a dent in it.

He had already begun to piece together the puzzle of the scene when Connor wordlessly brushed past him, breaking him out of his thoughts. He eyed it as it stooped down to examine the knife on the floor, doing exactly what he told it not to do: getting in his way and messing with the evidence.

Did this android listen to *any* of the orders it was given? Or did it just not give a shit? Maybe it was defective or something.
He was just about to shoo it away from the scene when he noticed it dipping its fingers into the blood on the knife, looking at it thoughtfully, and then—

What the fuck?

“Ugh, Jesus!” Hank recoiled at the sight. “What the hell are you doing?”

This thing was eating the blood like it was frosting on a goddamn cake.

“I’m analyzing the blood. I can check samples in real time,” said Connor simply. “I’m sorry. I should have warned you.”

Christ, why did CyberLife have to make it analyze the blood like that? Were they just fucking with humans at this point? They had to be.

“Okay, just... don’t... put anymore evidence in your mouth. You got it?”

Connor pointed its bloodied fingers in his direction, almost like a finger gun. “Got it.”

Hank shook his head as he walked away. “Fucking hell, I can’t believe this shit.”

As bizarre as this android was, he did have to admit that it was efficient. When it came to him a few minutes later, claiming that it knew what happened, he wasn’t expecting much. Androids were never an active part of investigations for a reason. Sure, they had the logic to determine what evidence was in front of them, but they didn’t have the imagination to present any picture of how it could have happened, or the emotional capacity to figure out the suspects’ motives. All they did was the dirty work behind the scenes—collecting the evidence, running tests, filing reports—because that was what they were good at.

But this one seemed to be good at other things. It stayed at the forefront instead of the background, examining evidence (in whatever weird-ass ways it deemed sufficient) and presenting theories as if they were facts... and Hank, who had suspicions of his own about the scene, wasn’t entirely against those facts.

It all started in the kitchen, it told him. The victim attacked the android with the bat. The android defended itself with the knife, and it went too far.

The idea that the android was only defending itself seemed more believable than the idea of it seeking out to murder its owner unprompted, Hank supposed. Most cases involving androids that he’d seen usually ended up that way, with the androids acting out of self-preservation rather than being driven by anger or malice. Saving their programs so they wouldn’t face the blue screen of death, or whatever.

“Okay, so your theory’s not totally ridiculous,” he said. “But it doesn’t tell us where the android went.”

So Connor, in all its skinny little android determination, went looking, following a trail that none of the humans there could see. It must have found something, as not a minute later, it returned, silently stealing a chair from the kitchen and walking away with it in tow.

Hank didn't know what it was trying to accomplish, so he intervened to stop it in its tracks. "What are you doing with that chair?"

Connor casually lifted the chair in front of it, as if that explained anything. "I'm going to check something."
"Huh." Hank hesitantly stepped aside, allowing it to trek past him without another word. He turned around, catching Chris’ eye in passing. "Gonna check something."

Connor’s idea of checking something was evidently more like an agonizingly slow examination of something, as it was taking forever, and Hank was tired of waiting around for it. With a sigh, he ventured into the hallway to see where it went, only to find the chair it had borrowed stuck directly underneath an opening into the attic. He briefly propped himself up and peered into it, squinting when all he saw was darkness.

Suddenly, there was a loud crash of something falling, followed by footsteps scurrying across the attic floor. Hank jolted at the unexpected noise, quickly stepping back down. Christ, what was that thing doing?

"Connor, what the fuck is going on up there?" he called.

If it was hoping to find something in the attic, it was wasting its time. Searching for any more signs of the murderer was a lost cause. This happened weeks ago... The android had to be gone by now—

“IT’s here, Lieutenant!” Connor shouted.

Holy shit.

The android in question appeared noticeably battered when it stepped down onto the chair from the entrance to the attic. There were burn marks, scratches, and indentations on its arms, where the damage was so bad that its synthetic skin had somehow gotten removed in some areas. Tiny dents dotted its plastic face, which, along with its clothing, was covered in splatters of the victim’s blood.

But it wasn’t the damage or the blood that surprised Hank; it was the fact that the android looked visibly terrified. Eyes wide and fearful. Jaw clenched, lips trembling as if it was holding back from crying.

It had to be faking this to get sympathy, to make the humans forget what it had done. Right? That was the only possible explanation Hank could think of, seeing that androids didn't actually feel any of the emotions this one was trying to present.

Right?

Connor was close behind the suspect, hopping down from the attic just as the suspect stood before Hank, its arms reluctantly held out together to be cuffed. It didn't look him in the eye, gazing down at its shoes like a child who had just been caught misbehaving.

“It was hiding in the attic this whole time,” said Connor.

Hank said nothing, unsure of what to make of this development. He pulled out his handcuffs to get to work.

The suspect lifted its head to stare not at the humans detaining him, but at Connor as the latter moved to stand obediently behind Hank.

“Why did you tell them?” it whispered, its voice strangely shaky.

Connor didn’t respond, staring back impassively. The circle of light on its head was blinking, as if processing its answer, but it never gave one.

“You didn’t have to,” the android continued.
"All right, come on." Hank lightly pulled the android away before it could get any more radical ideas. "Let's go."

“You don’t have to do what they tell you...”

"Let's go."

The android, defeated, finally obeyed.

Hank glanced at Connor in passing to find that it was unaffected by the other android's words. It simply watched it leave, then followed Hank out the door, content in a job well done.

That night, Hank learned that androids could be assholes to their own kind, too.
The next thing that Hank learned about androids was that they were strange.

Well, he pretty much knew that already, but in this case, they were even stranger than he thought. His first clue was when he was tasked to investigate the deviant that murdered its owner—a strange enough situation as it was.

Hank slowly sat down at the interrogation table, reaching over to peruse the suspect’s files. It was filled with photos of the crime scene, including the dead body of Carlos Ortiz, the murder weapon, the baseball bat, all the blood stains around the floors and walls... Then there was another collection of photos on the next page, somewhat grainier than the others, probably extracted from the Connor android’s memory.

Hank looked through them, muttering “what the fuck” under his breath at what had to be the most unusual scene involving an android he’d ever witnessed: the word rA9 scrawled repeatedly on the bathroom wall, and a wooden figurine sitting below it in the very center of the shower stall, with flowers surrounding it.

It was just like Connor had described it on their way to the police station earlier.

“Did you find any more evidence?” he’d asked it, in case he hadn’t gotten it all. It was a little hard to focus on finding anything else after being graced with the presence of the murder suspect hiding in the attic.

“I did find Red Ice on one of the tables,” said Connor.

“Yeah, I saw that, too,” Hank murmured. “Wasn’t surprised to see it... Seems to show up at a lot of crime scenes these days.”

“I also saw what appeared to be an altar in the bathroom.”

“An altar?” How the hell did he miss that?

“Yes.” Connor tilted its head inquisitively. “There was a carved statuette in the middle of the shower, with flowers and writing surrounding it. It looked like some sort of... offering.”

“A religious offering?”

“Correct.”

Hank never would have pegged Mr. Red Ice Ortiz for the religious type. “So... Carlos was—”

“I don’t think it was Carlos’ doing.”

“I... What?”

“I believe the deviant was the one that made it.”

But why? Androids didn’t believe in any higher power, let alone create an altar for one. They didn’t think about something like that. They didn’t think about anything at all. Maybe it had malfunctioned so bad that it somehow saw things in its program that it normally wouldn’t... Thought it was seeing Android God or some shit.
“To who?” he had to ask. “Or... what?”

He wondered if maybe Connor, being an android itself, might have an inkling of an idea, but it seemed just as puzzled as he was.

“I’m not sure.” After a long pause, it looked over at him, the light on its head blinking. “Lieutenant, do you know what ‘rA9’ means?”

No. He didn’t.

Presently, Hank shut the folder and started his interrogation, hoping he might find some answers. Something weird was happening with this android... He just didn’t know where to start. Or how.

Because it wasn’t fucking talking.

The deviant was completely silent, staring blankly down at its fists on the table. It had been this way the entire time, ever since it left the crime scene—not speaking, not looking at anyone, only following along. It was as if the realization that it was caught had caused its mechanical brain to shut down while the rest of it kept moving. Now, though, Hank wasn’t sure that it had moved at all since they sat it down in that chair.

He tried everything to get this thing’s attention. Calm questions. Snapping his fingers in its face. Even slamming his hands on the table and yelling—something that normally would, at the very least, startle a person. But this android wasn’t a person, so it didn’t even flinch.

This wasn’t getting anywhere. He figured it wouldn’t, considering that this broken and battered android probably didn’t have the highest trust in humans. Still, he couldn’t help but feel frustrated as he got to his feet.

“Fuck it,” he huffed. “I’m outta here.”

All eyes were on him when he re-entered the next room. “We’re wasting our time interrogating an android. We’re getting nothing out of it!”

Gavin suggested roughing it up a little, because of course he would. If it weren’t for the fact that he’d have to pay a hefty fine for harming police property, he’d probably have a field day beating up the other police androids for lunch money as a hobby.

Connor didn’t seem offended at the idea, only confident that such a method wouldn’t work.

“You would only damage it, and that wouldn’t make it talk. Deviants also have a tendency to self-destruct when they're in stressful situations.”

Not unlike some humans.

“Okay, smart-ass,” said Gavin. “What should we do then?”

Connor thoughtfully glanced back at the deviant in the holding room. “I could try questioning it.”

Gavin predictably laughed at the idea, but Hank, to his own surprise, considered it.

It... wasn’t a terrible idea. The suspect only ever spoke to one of its own kind—Connor—before being detained. Maybe it'd trust it enough to talk a little. Then again, Connor was the one who had snitched it out... But it was also the only android there at the scene.

Whatever. It was worth a shot.
“What do we have to lose?” He gestured from Connor to the suspect, which was still facing the table. “Go ahead. Suspect’s all yours.”

As Connor left the room, Gavin scowled. “You’re gonna let an android interrogate an android?”

“Well, you know.” Hank shrugged. “Using humans hasn’t worked out all that well.”

Gavin grumbled something under his breath just as Connor entered the interrogation room. It moseyed over to the table to thumb through the file, occasionally glancing at the deviant to spot a reaction. There was none, of course.

Before sitting down, Connor gave one more scan around the room, until its gaze landed on the two-way mirror on the wall. It immediately walked over and stared into it, presumably at its own reflection rather than the occupants of the room. It obviously knew they were there, so—

"What the fuck is it doing now?” Hank grumbled.

Was this thing checking itself out? He didn't know androids were even aware of themselves enough to recognize themselves in the mirror.

Maybe this one was just discovering it for itself, as it tentatively reached its hand up, almost as if to test it. Then, after a considerate pause, it decisively 'fixed' the tuft of hair that hung down over its forehead by moving it a millimeter to the side. It didn't matter, since the hair just fell right back to its original spot, but it seemed to matter to Connor anyway, as it contentedly whirled around in one fluid movement to stride back over to the table.

Fucking bizarre.

Connor slowly sat in the seat across from the deviant, prepared to begin. Hank leaned forward a little in his own seat, morbidly curious at how this might unfold, as it was the first time he got to see this android working alone.

The android’s interrogation started out calmly, with a series of questions that never earned a response. It worked carefully to keep the deviant’s 'emotions' in check, using a gentle voice and comforting words—something that Hank was a little shocked to see, considering how blunt and matter-of-fact it usually acted.

But then, when it realized that reassurance wasn’t doing anything, it flipped its switch.

If there was ever any doubt of androids’ ability to simulate emotions, Connor’s rapid change was proof. The understanding expression faded, morphing into something more callous, its voice suddenly stern.

“If you won’t talk, I’m going to have to probe your memory.”

Hank blinked from behind the two-way mirror. “They can do that?”

“Apparently,” said Chris.

Well, hell. Why didn’t they think of that? It was like they kept forgetting it wasn’t human.

He supposed it wasn’t too unreasonable for them to think that way, considering just how emotive the other android had been when it was caught—fearful, upset, betrayed. Even its stubborn silence felt more like defeat than just an android mentally shutting down.
Were all deviants like this? Considering that this was the first time Hank had ever met a deviant (as well as his adamant refusal to work on any cases involving them), he didn't know much about them except that they didn't do what they were told to do and that they acted differently than regular androids. He didn't realize just what made them so different until now, with the emotional example sitting directly in front of him, visibly juxtaposed by Connor's more stoic presence.

It was strange.

Connor's words must have been a threat in android-speak, as the deviant’s reaction to its warning was the biggest show of emotion they’d seen so far. It straightened in its seat in a flash, eyes wide with terror.

“No! Please don’t do that...”

Connor's threat seemed to work, as the deviant wasn't continuing its efforts to stay silent and still anymore. It averted its eyes to its bound hands, then shot a nervous glance at the mirror.

Hank swore softly when it somehow made direct eye contact. It knew it was being watched. No wonder it was trying to look emotional.

“What... What are they going to do to me?” The deviant glanced back at its fellow android, lowering its trembling voice. "They’re going to destroy me, aren’t they?”

“They're going to disassemble you to look for problems in your biocomponents,” said Connor coldly. “They have no choice if they want to understand what happened.”

Way to sugarcoat it, asshole.

“Why did you tell them you found me?” the deviant asked, its voice shaky. “Why couldn’t you just have left me there?”

“I was programmed to hunt deviants like you. I just accomplished my mission.”

Ah, so its mission was all it cared about. Good to know. Hank now had a more concrete reason to stay far away from this thing.

Though he supposed its focus on the mission at hand was helpful, at least in this case, as it knew exactly what it had to do for this one. When its straightforward honesty seemed to pressure the deviant just enough, it reverted back to something a little more understanding yet again, taking advantage of the vulnerable emotions the deviant displayed and not only acknowledging them, but matching them.

Hank had to admit that the way it conducted its interrogation was impressive. More impressive was the fact that this approach actually seemed to work, as it finally made the deviant confess.

Ortiz had been abusing it every day, it said. It eventually snapped and defended itself before it could be destroyed... and then it couldn't stop.

The details of the matter weren’t what surprised Hank, since he had already pretty much guessed them before. What did surprise him was the fact that the android said it felt scared.

Until now, he had figured that the emotions this deviant showed were convincing but ultimately fake, just like its words. After all, androids could say anything and not really mean it, just as they could show emotion without actually feeling it. They could simulate it when the situation called for it without necessarily knowing what emotion it was or how it felt, like Connor had done not too long
But this one was different. This one somehow knew it was scared. This one knew what fear was.

And Hank sure as hell didn’t know what to think of that.

It seemed that Connor didn’t, either. Its expression was bordering on confused as it leaned in to ask the golden question.

“When did you start feeling emotion?”

“Before, he used to beat me and I never said anything. But one day I realized it wasn’t...fair!”

It spat the word out like a curse.

“I felt anger... Hatred,” the deviant hissed. “And then I knew what I had to do.”

There was a beat of silence from the occupants of the other room as they processed this. Hank leaned back in his seat with a fascinated breath of "huh," his mind starting to race at the implications of what this android just confessed.

It hadn’t looked at its situation with any sort of logic or reason like androids would typically do. Its ultimate solution to kill its owner was motivated entirely by its emotions.

He had already been shocked enough by the concept of this android (and others like it) killing its owner, but the fact that the killing was because of something so uniquely human rather than some random malfunction was making his head spin. Why did it think this way? How did it learn to think this way? Why and how was it even capable, since androids usually didn't think at all?

The questions ran on a loop in his head, but, for reasons he couldn't pinpoint, he wasn't concerned about the idea. Rather, he found himself oddly intrigued.

Connor, meanwhile, was unaffected by the android’s display of emotion. It merely turned in its seat and announced that it was done, satisfied with the confession.

“Well.” Hank grunted and got to his feet. “There you have it.”

They went back to retrieve the android, with Hank following along to see it through. The second he stepped inside, Connor gravitated to the door, its mission accomplished. Hank disregarded it, focused instead on the android in the seat as it jumped back from the arriving humans.

“Leave me alone!” it cried. “Don’t touch me.”

Knowing its only solution so far was to lash out when it was afraid, Hank slowly reached for his weapon, just in case the android tried to attack. It didn’t yet, only jerking away from Chris’ attempt to grab it. Gavin started snapping at it to move despite this, which wasn’t making the situation any better.

Jesus. It just admitted to being abused by an angry human. Why would it listen to anything another angry human told it to do?

Connor spoke up from the doorway.

“You shouldn’t touch it. It’ll self-destruct if it feels threatened.”

“Hey.” Gavin whirled around to glare at it. “Stay out of this, got it? No fuckin’ android’s gonna tell
me what to do.”

Hank half-expected Connor to relent as any typical android would do, until he remembered that this android wasn’t typical. It never followed anyone’s orders (apparently), and it certainly wasn’t about to start with Gavin’s.

So it did what it did best: It ignored the order entirely.

“You don’t understand,” it said more urgently. “If it self-destructs, we won’t get anything out of it.”

“I told you to shut your fucking mouth!” Gavin yelled.

The deviant, meanwhile, continued to struggle, anxiously jolting away from Chris’s hold like a wounded animal. The ring of light on its temple was red and blinking, its eyes shifting, its hands beginning to shake. Hank didn’t know much about androids, but even he could tell that none of this was a good sign.

In spite of himself, he was about to join Connor in telling them to stop when Connor did something unexpected.

It started yelling back.

“I can’t let you do that!” It hastened over to shove the humans away and stand protectively in front of the deviant. “Leave it alone—now!”

Hank couldn’t believe it. This android didn’t just defy a human’s orders... It gave the human an order of its own.

He would have started laughing his head off at this development if Gavin hadn’t abruptly escalated the situation by whipping out his gun to point it directly at Connor.

“I warned you, motherfucker!”

All right, this was getting ridiculous. Hank had already seen one dead body today. He didn’t need to deal with two more.

“That’s enough,” he said.

“Mind your own business, Hank,” Gavin hissed, his eyes still locked on Connor, who only stared back into the face of its prospective death, unblinking.

“I said”—Hank pulled out his own gun and pointed it at him—“that’s enough.”

He wasn’t sure what had compelled him to do that, but it worked. Gavin gritted his teeth, his grip on the gun shaking with fury, until he finally put it down, spitting out a swear.

He glared at Hank as the latter lowered his gun, too. “You’re not gonna get away with it this time.”

Please.

As Gavin stormed out of the room, Connor crouched down in front of where the deviant was cowering on the floor and held out its hand in reassurance. Hank wasn’t sure if it was feigned this time or not.

“Everything is all right,” it said gently. “It’s over now. Nobody is going to hurt you.” It raised itself back to full stance to face the openly perplexed Chris. “Please, don’t touch it. Let it follow you out of
the room, and it won't cause any trouble.”

It went quietly, just as anticipated, but not before it whispered something to Connor. Hank didn’t hear it, just as he didn’t hear much of what he imagined were cryptic answers to most of Connor’s questions. Frankly, he didn’t care at this point. This whole night was too long and filled with too many robots for his liking, and he just wanted to go home so he could put his feet up and have another drink. Or three.

As he followed the rest of them out of the room, he watched the two androids part ways. The deviant was lost in its thoughts, gazing at its feet as it shuffled behind the officers to its holding cell, recovering from the waves of ‘emotion’ it couldn’t seem to control. Connor, who had just shown some emotion itself, was staring at the deviants’ retreating back, its LED blinking.

Hank still didn’t know what to make of this thing. He’d first thought it to be just another mindless, emotionless, objective-driven drone like all the others, until the way it intervened to protect the deviant made him start to wonder if he might be wrong.

He wasn’t, as it turned out. Connor proved it just by standing there, allowing its expression to revert to its neutral blankness as if nothing had happened—which made Hank realize that the emotion it showed before was all an act, much like its interrogation. This android had just been putting on a face, purely because that was what it was programmed to do.

He found himself strangely disappointed, and he felt like an idiot for it. Why was he expecting a robot to act like anything other than a robot? The deviant didn’t act like one, but it was the outlier of how androids were supposed to be, not the example. The example was, unfortunately, the android standing in front of him.

When said android turned to leave, it caught Hank’s eye. With a little too much cheer in its voice and not enough in its face, it said, “It was a pleasure working with you. Good night, Lieutenant Anderson.”

Hank didn’t respond, watching it trot down the hallway to leave his sight, hopefully for good.

The rest of that night, he couldn’t stop his mind from racing with questions about androids and what he knew about them. If they only simulated emotions, why were some of them so driven by them to do drastic things, like murder their owners? If the emotions weren’t simulated and were actually real, how could that be possible when he knew for a fact that they didn’t feel anything? What was causing them to malfunction like this? Were they even malfunctioning at all? They had to be, right?

They had to be.

Malfunctioning or not, the deviant was in custody and would probably be taken back to CyberLife to be fixed, if they didn't manage to tear it apart for its crimes. Maybe it could get reset somehow so it wouldn’t have to think about how ‘scared’ it was ever again.

In the end, Hank didn’t care if that fear was real or not. He knew what fear felt like. He knew how hollow it could make a person when that fear was made a reality...

God. He needed to shut his mind off before it wandered too far.

He collapsed into his chair at home, sighing.

There was no use in speculating on the inner workings of robots. It was all over. The night was over. The case was solved. No more deviants to worry about, at least not in his case.
And, as far as he knew, he wouldn’t have to see that damn android again.

He had to see that damn android again.

Not just that—He had to work with that damn android to investigate more damn androids to see what was making them all go crazy.

Did Jeffrey have it out for him? Didn’t he know how much he didn’t want to work with androids? Didn’t he see how much he’d wanted to strangle Connor multiple times last night for even just looking at him funny? Maybe he saw him stop Gavin from shooting it and thought that meant he suddenly loved them.

Fuck it. Fine, he’d investigate these deviants if he had to. The sheer volume of related cases would at least keep him busy, keep his mind occupied on other things. But he didn’t need a partner for it. He didn’t want a partner for it. Especially not some smart-ass android who never listened to him anyway.

The smart-ass android in question had followed him from Jeffrey’s office after eavesdropping on their polite conversation. It was now staring at him from where it stood by his desk, trying and failing to find the right words for this kind of situation in its social programming.

Hank didn’t respond to any of its bullshit friendliness, knowing it was a farce. He only sat there, facing away from it with his arms stubbornly crossed over his chest, turning a deaf ear to every one of its attempts to talk to him.

In spite of this, Connor persisted, even after being met with silence twice already. “In any case... I’d like you to know that I’m very happy to be working with you. I’m sure we’ll make a great team.”

Its forced smile wasn’t fooling him. It seemed to recognize this, as its smile slowly began to fade.

It finally managed to get the fact that its new partner was actively ignoring it through its thick skull, as it moved on to the empty desk across from him without any further interaction. It sat down to get started on its work, leaving Hank to stew over his misfortune in silence.

He had no choice in this, did he? This thing was going to be stuck with him whether he liked it or not, and Fowler wasn’t going to change his mind about it... Then again, Fowler probably didn’t have much of a choice, either. There were a lot of rogue androids running around lately, and someone had to deal with them.

But why did it have to be him? Couldn’t they just send this android out to investigate these cases by itself? Wasn't it programmed to do that sort of thing? Fowler had mentioned it being some special state-of-the-art prototype with an advanced computer brain... If it was so advanced, why did it need a human partner to tell it what to do? It wasn't like it couldn't be trusted; Hank doubted it would do anything that went against its objective to solve this case, seeing that it obviously had no qualms about hunting down its own kind.

He sourly glanced at where Connor was seated, only to see that it was already looking back at him. The second it caught his eye, it opened its plastic gob to say something, since it was, after all, incapable of keeping it shut.
“You have a dog, right?”

Was this thing stalking him or something?

Hank narrowed his eyes suspiciously. “How do you know that?”

Connor nodded to just behind him. “The dog hairs on your chair.” Its tone shifted to something more chipper. “I like dogs. What’s your dog’s name?”

Why was it trying to get to know him? Wasn’t it just supposed to do its job and let Hank do his own job in peace? Or was it under the delusion that ‘partner’ meant ‘friend’? Did an android even know how to be a friend?

“What's it to you?”

Connor hesitated, then lowered its gaze, almost in a disappointed way.

Hank watched it out of the corner of his eye, knowing that it had to be faking this reaction to get him to talk. But, to his surprise, it didn't attempt to pry any further, perhaps accepting at long last that Hank wasn't going to give it the time of day.

And yet, without knowing why, Hank found himself giving it the time of day anyway.

“Sumo,” he conceded. “I call him Sumo.”

Connor’s eyes lit up.

Answering it was a mistake, as it only led to more invasive questions. Did you see the basketball game last night? Do you like heavy metal? Why do you despise androids? Do you usually arrive to work at this time? Blah, blah, blah.

It was interesting to see this android making an effort at all, though. Most other androids just accepted their tasks and did them, not caring about who they were working with or why, but Connor was different. Connor was oddly more sociable and inquisitive than others of its kind, always 'thinking' and observing and asking questions, much like an actual investigator.

Hank understood then why this android was the one he had to work with, but he couldn’t ignore how strange it was. Not just the android itself (which had to be the strangest android he’d ever met, with Ortiz’s android a close second), but the whole situation: the fact that androids breaking away from their programs was even a possibility, the fact that some androids like the one in their custody might somehow feel something despite all he had been led to believe, and the fact that he was the one who had to figure out how and why.

It all felt like some sort of bad dream.

The source of the bad dream interrupted his bitter rumination when it started thinking aloud.

"243 files." Connor was touching the terminal in front of it, the synthetic skin on its hand now removed to reveal the sleek white plastic underneath. "The first dates back nine months. It all started in Detroit... and quickly spread across the country."

As if sensing Hank's eyes on it, it turned its head to look at him. He instantly shifted his attention back to his own terminal, not wanting it to think he gave a shit about what it had to say.

"An AX400 is reported to have assaulted a man last night," it stated. "That could be a good starting
Hank scowled. If this thing was going to tell him when to work and give him orders like it did to Gavin, they were going to have problems.

Firmly believing that a better starting point for them would be for it to leave him alone, he turned away from it dismissively to focus on his own work. Connor didn't seem to appreciate that, as it didn't take long for it to appear in his vision like a slap to the face. Evidently, it also didn't take long for it to revert straight back to its default 'asshole' setting.

“I've been assigned this mission, Lieutenant. I didn’t come here to wait until you feel like working.”

Ah, there it was. He knew it wouldn't stay pleasant for long.

It was always the same with these things. Only ever willing to perform their duties without thinking of anything or anyone else. Hank had to remind himself not to get too mad about it, considering that that was what he had been expecting this android to do in the first place.

...

He still got mad, though.

Something about its words—be it the haughty tone it was using, the insinuation that he was lazy, or just the fact that it still wouldn’t shut up—hit a nerve. The next thing he knew, Hank had snatched Connor by its perfect collar and forcefully shoved it against the wall beside him, bringing his face close to his to look directly into its unblinking eyes.

“Listen, asshole,” he growled. "If it was up to me, I'd throw the lot of you in a dumpster and set a match to it. So stop pissing me off!" He shook it violently in his grip so that it hit against the wall again. It only stared back at him, completely unfazed, which didn't help his anger. “Or things are gonna get nasty.”

"Uh, Lieutenant?"

Chris interrupted his tirade to let him know about a lead on one of the most recent deviant files in the system of 200-gazillion more. The same deviant that the asshole in his grasp had suggested investigating moments before... Figures.

Hank let go of Connor like the trash it was and stepped away with a huff.

“I’m on it.”

He reached over to snatch his belongings from the desk, including his phone, and stormed off, leaving Connor behind to recover from being unceremoniously thrown around. He knew it wouldn't stay there for long; seconds after going into the hallway, he could hear footsteps clacking in his direction from behind.

As he sighed in exasperation and stopped, waiting for Connor to catch up, he glanced down at the phone in his hand, only to find that it had a voicemail. A little confused (who would even be calling him?), he listened to the message, eyeing Connor as it halted beside him to wait for further instruction.

“Lieutenant Anderson? This is Connor. I'm the android sent by CyberLife. It's almost noon and I'm waiting for you at the offi—”
Hank shut it off. “You called my phone?”

“I couldn’t find you,” said Connor simply.

Hank sighed again, turning to leave for the investigation with his new partner obediently at his heels.

Fucking androids.
The next thing that Hank learned about androids was that they could be surprising.

His new android partner didn't give him the chance to realize this for a while, of course. The first part of that day, it acted exactly how he'd expected it to: focused on the mission at hand and completely unable to shut up about it as a result.

"The deviant is an AX400 model," it explained on their way to the lead. "It attacked its owner last night. The owner made it out alive, but the deviant ran away."

"Where was it last spotted?" Hank asked.

"Near the local convenience store."

They arrived there soon enough and went in to investigate, with Connor immediately moving to wander around the store by itself. Hank made a beeline for the cash register, where a clerk was slumped over in boredom.

"Morning, sir. Lieutenant Anderson, Detroit Police." Hank showed his badge. "We received a tip about a runaway android in the area, wanted to ask a few questions."

"Uh, okay. I haven't seen any androids in here, though."

Hank glanced behind him, spotting Connor now looking directly at one of the cameras on the ceiling.

"Connor," he called, earning its attention. "Come here."

Connor walked over, looking from him to the clerk. The clerk shifted uneasily at the android's presence.

Hank gestured to him. "Show him the photo."

Connor held up its hand after producing the photo of the deviant on its palm. "Have you seen this android?"

"I... yeah, actually," said the clerk, looking suddenly confused. "Yeah, I guess I did. Its face looked just like the picture, but it wasn't dressed like an android. Didn't talk like one either."

"So it talked to you?" asked Hank.
"It asked me if I could spare them some money." The clerk shrugged. "I thought it was weird, told them no. Haven't seen them since then."

Wait a minute. "Them?"

"She... It had a little girl with it."

A little girl? There was no report of a missing child in this case, not even from the assault victim... It must have happened after the assault. But why would a deviant kidnap a little girl?

The deviant would definitely be easier to spot with a kid in tow, assuming the kid was still with it, but they needed to know more about which way it went. There were officers around the area, but so far nobody had a clue.

Well, nobody except Connor, who suggested that it was still in the vicinity. It wasn't an unreasonable guess, considering that deviants didn't seem to know where to go when they couldn't be ordered around anymore. Carlos Ortiz's android, who hid at the scene of the crime for nearly three weeks, was proof of that.

So if it was still around, where was it hiding?

Connor already seemed to have an idea. It zeroed in on a run-down, abandoned house nearby and began to walk over to the wire fence that surrounded it. Hank, in spite of himself, followed.

"See something?"

Connor stopped at the fence and crouched down to examine a hole in the bottom.

"There's blue blood on the fence," it observed. "Another android was here."

Hank went closer to stand just behind it. Sure enough, there was a trace of blue on a sharp point, which Connor reached out to touch.

Don't put the blood in your mouth.

It put the blood in its mouth.

"The AX400 went this way," it stated.

It confidently ducked under the opening in the fence and trekked around the house to where Hank assumed the front door was. Hank lingered behind a little, slowly slipping into the yard after him in hopes of finding some clues outside.

He didn't get much of a chance, though, for just a few minutes later, there was a loud crash from inside the house, followed by someone yelling. Hank hurried around the broken porch and through the open front door to find Connor picking itself up off the floor.

"Connor, what's going on?"

"It's here!" it shouted, jumping to its feet and running. "Call it in!"

Holy shit.

As Connor burst out the back door, Hank moved to follow it, only to hesitate when he noticed another android standing in the corner, gaping at him. Half of its twitching face was practically burned off, stained blue with dried android blood, and it was wearing some kind of tarp as a poncho
over an old uniform. Another deviant?

"Hey—"

The android suddenly darted up the stairs. Hank froze, not knowing which deviant to follow, before he hissed a swear and reluctantly rushed out the front door, notifying the surrounding police on his radio on the way.

Connor was fast. By the time Hank went outside, it was already far down the road, taking a sharp right into a nearby alleyway. When he finally managed to catch up with it, he noticed the deviant climbing over the wire fence that looked out into the highway.

Just as described, the deviant looked oddly human, with baggy clothes, a haircut, and no LED on its temple, but its face looked similar to the photo of the AX400 model in the file. Only this time, it didn't sport a vacant expression; instead, it seemed fearful and even desperate as it hopped down the other side of the fence.

So did the child that was with it. She didn't seem to be there against her will as Hank had suspected, as she went with the deviant readily, sliding down the slope and grabbing its hand when they got to their feet. The deviant clutched the child protectively, scanning the busy highway for their chance to cross.

Wait, what?

"Oh, fuck," Hank said breathlessly, stopping at the fence just beside Connor. "That's insane."

Connor moved, preparing to jump the fence too, and Hank automatically pushed down on its shoulder despite himself. "Hey! Where are you going?"

"I can't let them get away."

"They won't! They'll never make it to the other side."

"I can't take that chance!"

"Hey, you will get yourself killed!" Hank grabbed its arm to pull it down when it tried to climb again. "Do not go after them, Connor! That's an order!"

Not only could this thing get itself killed, but it could also jeopardize the deviant and the child's safety if it distracted them. No matter how he felt about androids, he couldn't risk seeing the deviant die. He definitely couldn't risk seeing a child die.

And, as much as he hated to admit it, he couldn't risk seeing his partner die, either.

He was certain that Connor would ignore him as it always did, but something in his tone must have told it to relent, as it loosened its grip, letting Hank tear it away from the fence. It remained where it stood, something in its face twitching as it focused on its lost prize, as if it was taking everything in its power to keep itself there.

Hank didn't care. He let go of its arm, content that it was finally starting to listen to him.

Except it wasn't.

He should have known that it would try to do something once he let his guard down. The very instant he released his hold on it, Connor shot into action, clambering over the fence before he even
had the chance to protest.

"Connor—God damn it!" He jumped up to snatch it back, but it was already out of reach, hopping down to the slope of ground on the other side of the fence.

When it swiftly stepped into the fray, Hank pressed his forehead against the fence in exasperation, thinking that maybe he had been too hasty in wanting this thing to survive. Maybe, in fact, playing on a busy highway was exactly where this plastic asshole needed to be.

Connor weaved through the speeding vehicles like they were nothing until it eventually reached the median, where the deviant and the girl were now standing, preparing to risk their lives a second time. The moment a car whizzed past, offering a window of reprieve, the deviant pushed the girl to safety on the other side.

Relief washed over Hank at the sight. Good… The kid was safe.

The deviant likely would have been, too, if it weren't for Connor's special talent of ruining everything. It managed to catch up with the deviant, grabbing it from behind just as it was preparing to cross. The deviant put up a fight, eventually shoving Connor away so that it staggered directly into the path of an oncoming car.

Hank sucked in a breath, expecting to see it get pummeled, but it never did. It only got knocked down into the next lane, then clipped by another passing car, which made it stumble again. When it finally regained its balance and stood up fully, it lifted its head to search for the deviant and resume its chase.

But there was no one left to chase, as it turned out. The runaways had used Connor’s distracting near-death as their chance to disappear.

Hank heaved a sigh when he realized this, frustrated that Connor’s suicidal chase was all for nothing. But the kid made it out alive, at least, so he supposed the deviant's escape was for the best.

He glanced back at Connor, who had just scurried back to safe ground on the median, finally accepting defeat. As if feeling his eyes on it, it looked up at him, its expression blank.

Hank jerked his hands high into the air to flip it off, then turned his back to it with a huff of, “Fucking androids.”

With that, he decided to leave his new partner behind, figuring that it would find its way back eventually.

Unfortunately, he was right, though he didn't expect to be proven right so soon. Just as he'd reached the end of the street, he heard footsteps already hurrying up to him from behind.

Damn it. Curse its ridiculously fast robot legs.

“Well, look who it is,” he mumbled as Connor slowed to stand beside him, perfectly unbothered by the exercise that still had Hank slightly out of breath. “CyberLife’s first-ever deaf android.”

“I'm sorry for disobeying your order, Lieutenant,” Connor stated, not sounding sorry at all. “My assessment of the situation told me that I had a 73% chance of catching the deviant, so I had to try.”

Obviously unimportant: the remaining 27% chance of it getting run over by a semi-truck.

“Well, you failed,” said Hank. “Guess your statistics need some adjusting.”
Connor didn't respond.

They arrived to where Hank's car was parked outside the convenience store to find that Ben was still there. He spotted them and walked over, tapping his tablet lightly. "Empty-handed, huh?"

"Yeah, it managed to escape."

He could practically feel Connor's eyes on the back of his head as it wordlessly strode over to the car. It had been quiet the rest of their walk back, probably trying to understand why it couldn't catch the suspects despite its best efforts. Hank wondered if it had ever failed at anything before.

Ben noticed its unusual silence as well, nodding in its direction. "Couldn't catch it either?"

"Nah. Pretty sure it's short-circuiting because of it."

"What exactly happened?"

"It chased the deviant all the way across the highway, but it still got away."

"You sent it into the highway?"

"No," said Hank hotly. "The dumbass went by itself, after I specifically told it not to."

It took Ben a moment to register this before he shot Connor an amused glance. "Maybe it's going deviant, too."

Hank almost wished that were true. Maybe then it'd be less insufferable.

He snorted at the idea as he trudged over to the car, only to stop with his hand on the door when the mention of 'deviant' reminded him of something. "Oh, hey, see if you can get someone to verify whether the deviant's assault victim had a kid."

"He never mentioned a kid in his report, but I'll double check. Why?"

"We might have a kidnapping on our hands. The deviant had a little girl with it."

"It wasn't a little girl," said Connor from where it stood on the other side of the car.

Hank turned around. "What?"

"It was a YK500 model. An android child."

At first, Hank was relieved to realize that it wasn't an actual child being put in danger, but then he felt like an idiot for believing the opposite. Now he couldn't even tell when a child was real anymore?

"Fine." He scowled. "So what do we do for a missing android child?"

"We'll contact the victim first, see if he knows anything about it," Ben suggested.

"All right." Hank opened the car door. "Let me know if you spot 'em. I'm gonna see if we can find any other leads in the meantime."

When he got in the driver's seat, he glanced over at Connor to see it sitting in a sort of stubborn silence. He almost would have guessed that it was frustrated, or maybe disappointed, if it was able to feel anything.
It caught his eye when he shut the door and hesitated for a moment before facing forward. It looked as if it wanted to say something but was holding itself back.

"Something wrong?" Hank asked, struggling to keep the sarcasm out of his tone.

Connor took a few moments to reply. "I just wish I hadn't failed to catch the deviant. That's all."

Hank didn't know androids could wish for anything. He shook his head as he recalled how desperately it had wanted to chase that deviant across the highway. "Why do you want to hunt down your own kind so badly?"

"They're not my kind. They're deviants. And catching deviants is part of my mission."

"And nothing matters more to you than your mission, huh," Hank muttered. "Well, you know, sometimes missions fail."

"Not for me. I wasn't programmed to fail."

"Even androids can fail," said Hank coolly. He knew that more than anyone. "So just... you know, accept it and move on."

"But I didn't catch the deviant."

Jesus Christ, was this all it could think about?

"Look, I wanted to catch it too, okay?"

"So why didn't you want me to go after it?"

This android was hardly in a position to be asking him questions.

"Because I also didn't want to see any robot parts littering the highway!"

Connor still didn't seem to understand, so Hank let out an exasperated sigh.

"Connor, not everything is as black and white as getting a mission and crossing it off your list. You can't always do things just based on what your numbers and assessments tell you. Sometimes you have to look at a situation and make hard decisions, and sometimes that involves putting people's lives over your mission, including your own. No mission is worth risking lives for, if you can help it. All right?" He reached over to turn on the engine, the roar of it starting almost drowning out his voice. "Now, are you done? Or are you just gonna keep questioning my orders?"

Connor fell silent.

Within the next couple of hours, Hank, knowing there was no going back on being assigned android cases, took the time to browse a number of unsolved deviant files. He was hoping that just the circumstances stated in the files might be a better starting point for the investigation, but so far, none of the deviants, nor their crimes, had much in common. Different models, different times, different crimes... Sometimes assaults, rarely homicides, often disappearances.

The biggest question on his mind was what was causing them to go deviant and do all these things in the first place. The two he had investigated so far seemed to involve assault of some kind, but that didn't necessarily mean that assault was what triggered the malfunction. Was it a reaction to some kind of shock to the system, like how getting damaged made Ortiz's android go nuts? Or maybe it was just random?
He supposed he had to investigate more to find out. He grimaced at the idea, not looking forward to having to deal with all these androids, but it least it gave him a new challenge.

Some challenges were better than others, however. The other challenge that he still didn't know how to master was in the car with him as he drove off later that day to get some lunch.

"Did you find a new lead?" Connor asked, noticing the change in course.

"Nope."

"Then... where are we going?"

"Android bullshit makes me hungry," said Hank gruffly. "Grabbing some lunch. Feel free to stay in the car."

Connor said nothing further, sitting back in its seat.

It started raining harder just as he turned onto the road heading toward the Chicken Feed. Hank huffed, unsurprised, as he got out of the car. This day just kept getting better and better.

He shut the door with a slam, hoping Connor would stay in its seat while he ate like he told it to.

It didn't, of course.

As Hank waited for Gary to make his burger, he heard footsteps approaching behind him. He glanced over to see Connor walking up with its hands behind its back, already soaked in the rain.

Hank sighed. "What is your problem? Don't you ever do as you're told?" When it only stared at him in response, he irritably added, "Look, you don't have to follow me around like a poodle."

Maybe that was why it said it liked dogs. It acted just like one, from following him around to eating and chasing after things it shouldn't. He wondered if he could teach it some tricks.

Connor stood there in silence, gazing into the contents of the food truck, probably scanning it with its little robot eyes. It then looked back at Hank, hesitant at first, until it spoke gently.

"I think our relationship got off on the wrong foot. We should... forget what happened and start over. What do you say?"

Hank couldn't get too mad at its attempt at an encouraging smile. At least it was trying.

"Look," he grumbled, "they sent me a piece of plastic for a partner, and I'm dealing with it. But if you think we're gonna be buddies, you're as stupid as you look."

Connor blinked before narrowing its eyes in comprehension. Maybe it had finally learned to recognize when it was being insulted.

Gary gave him his meal, reminding him just how hungry all the bullshit of the day had made him.

"Thanks, Gary. I'm starving."

"Hey, don't leave that thing here," Gary called.

Ha. "Not a chance. Follows me everywhere." He heard Connor getting closer and gestured behind him as proof. "See?"
Connor predictably joined him at the table nearby as he began to chow down. He knew better than to hope it wouldn't start talking.

"Do you eat here often?" it asked.

Was it trying to make small talk? Christ.

"Most days," said Hank with his mouth still half-full of food. "Gary makes the best burger in Detroit."

Connor found that debatable. "Eating here that frequently is not healthy, Lieutenant, and neither is your meal. It contains 1.4 times the recommended daily intake of calories and twice the cholesterol level." (Hank examined his burger thoughtfully, more impressed than disgusted.) "You shouldn't eat that."

"Everybody's gotta die of something," he replied before eating it anyway.

He could practically see the DOES NOT COMPUTE error across its plastic face.

Hank needed to learn to keep his mouth shut whenever this thing spoke to him, because it just took his replies as signs to assail him with questions again. Eventually, he decided to stop indulging it, pointedly taking a huge bite of his burger as his answer.

The android paused, getting the message, but Hank knew it would ignore that message eventually, seeing that it was pretty much physically incapable of shutting up when it was on a roll.

At last, it spoke again, proving him correct. "Can I ask you another question?"

Hank decided it was his turn to be a smart-ass this time. "You just did."

"I would like to ask you another question," it amended.

Fine. "Shoot."

Connor leaned onto the table to rest its elbows, its voice trailing somewhat, almost cautiously. "This morning, when we were chasing those deviants... Why didn't you want me to cross the highway?"

This again? He should have just let it run free instead of trying to stop it at the fence. It would've been better than having to endure this conversation.

"'Cause you could've been killed," he said, like it wasn't obvious before. Then he hesitated, realizing it sounded too much like he cared about it or something. "And I... don't like filling out paperwork for damaged equipment."

"There's no need to worry about that," said Connor. "My destruction would be unfortunate, but it would not affect the investigation. CyberLife can retrieve my memory and transfer it to a new body so that I can continue with my mission despite the interruption."

Shit, really? If only it were that easy for humans.

"I'm sorry," it added, noticing something in his expression. "I thought you knew that."

Apparently, everyone thought he knew more about androids than he actually did.

"I don't know that much about all you assholes," Hank mumbled. "Frankly, I don't care to."
Connor frowned a little at this response. "Can I ask you a personal question, Lieutenant?"

Might as well. It was probably gonna ask anyway, whether he allowed it or not.

It tilted its head inquisitively, its voice sincere. "Why do you hate androids so much?"

Hank looked into its imploring eyes, reminding himself yet again that the sincerity he saw in them was just as fake as the rest of it. It was the same fake sincerity of the android doctor who told him his child had died under its perfect, practiced hands. Just performing its task like all androids, mindless and obedient even as it let someone's life slip under its fingers.

But hey, it did the operation, right? Mission accomplished, no matter what the cost.

Not feeling. Not caring. Taking over everything that capable humans had built for themselves, leaving them lazy and complacent and almost as uncaring as the androids themselves...

The reasons circled on a merry-go-round inside his head, but he decided not to name specifics, figuring that whatever he said, Connor would find a know-it-all explanation for it. So he settled for his go-to vague answer.

"I have my reasons."

Connor briefly opened its mouth, perhaps to ask another question, before it stopped itself. He was hoping it would get the hint to drop the subject and move on.

"I suppose I could tell you what I know about deviants," it stated.

"You read my mind. Proceed."

"We believe that a mutation occurs in the software of some androids, which can lead to them emulating a human emotion."

Hank wondered if he could get it to explain things like a normal person. "In English, please."

"They don't really... feel emotions. They just get overwhelmed by irrational instructions, which can lead to unpredictable behavior."

That android that murdered its owner sure wasn't reacting to irrational instructions, and neither was the deviant on the highway as it risked its life to escape. Hank only ever saw emotions—fear, anger, desperation—or something like them in the deviants he'd seen so far. Emotions that would make anyone act unpredictably, humans and androids alike.

"Emotions always screw everything up," he murmured. "Maybe androids aren't as different from us as we thought."

At least the deviants weren't. Androids in general were another story.

He looked at the non-deviant before him, knowing that this one, at least, was the kind of different he was expecting. He wondered how on earth it managed to know so much about deviants when it barely even knew how to think for itself.

"You ever dealt with deviants before?" he asked. "Before the past few days, I mean."

Connor considered it for a moment. "A few months back, a deviant was threatening to jump off the
roof with a little girl... I managed to save her."

He did remember seeing about that rooftop incident on the news. He had no idea that Connor was the same android that was sent there to talk it down.

It seemed he still had more to learn about this android than he thought, even after he'd learned so much about it already. Its history, the way it acted, how it knew what to do and what its mission was...

He thought about Connor's efforts to get to know him before and wondered just how much it happened to learn about him. It seemed to know plenty already.

"So I guess you've done your homework, right?" he mused. "Know everything there is to know about me?"

He was surprised to see Connor looking at him thoughtfully. "I know you graduated top of your class. You made a name for yourself in several cases and became the youngest lieutenant in Detroit. I also know you've received several disciplinary warnings in recent years, and... you spend a lot of time in bars."

Well, it was definitely observant. He wasn't sure if he liked that or not. "So, what's your conclusion?"

He was fully expecting it to dismiss him or state in its own smart-ass way that it didn't make conclusions at all, but it didn't. It spoke carefully, probably searching for the right words that wouldn't piss him off this time.

"I think working with an officer with... personal issues is an added challenge," it said honestly, "but... adapting to human unpredictability is one of my features."

_Did it just w—_

Oh.

It started doing some kind of bizarre android blinking, its LED briefly turning yellow before it returned to normal again.

"I just got a report of a suspected deviant. It's a few blocks away." It nodded in its general direction. "We should go have a look."

Hank was about to ignore its words purely because it was trying to tell him what to do yet again, until he realized that it was more of a gentle suggestion than anything else. It even politely excused itself and went back to the car to let Hank finish eating, finally recognizing that he wasn't keen on talking any more than he had to.

Hmm. Maybe it really could adapt to people.

After finishing his lunch, Hank returned to the car, where Connor was sitting in silence, staring forward stoically. It blinked and slowly turned its head to look at Hank as he plopped into the driver's seat with a contented sigh. As much as he hated the idea of going along with this android's plans, he did suppose that now was a better time than any to go check out the new case it was talking about before.

"So," he said casually, "where'd you say that suspect was last seen?"
Connor's eyes lit up, as if it hadn't expected him to consider its lead at all.

The building it led them to was one of the old ones in the city, mostly abandoned, as it sat directly next to the busy atmosphere of the new urban farm. Pretty good place for a deviant to squat, he had to admit. No one to bother them, all that noise to cover them up... Bird shit on the walls and windows acting as a universal repellent.

Ugh. Was it too late to turn back?

As Hank walked inside, letting Connor lead the way, he noticed that it had become uncharacteristically quiet, almost like it was thinking about something. Maybe it was just recalling the fact that the conversation they had at the table didn't end up with him wanting to shove its head into it this time—a personal victory for both of them. That was what Hank was thinking about, anyway.

By the time he stepped out of the elevator and noticed that Connor was no longer following, however, he realized that it wasn't thinking at all. Instead, it was just standing there, looking like it was sleeping... Eyes closed, face calm, body perfectly still.

Wondering if it had somehow shut down without warning, Hank called its name.

Connor opened its eyes.

Good morning. "You run out of batteries, or what?"

"I'm sorry," it said simply. "I was making a report to CyberLife."

They could do that just by closing their eyes? What else could these androids do that he didn't know about?

It still wouldn't budge even after waking up, so Hank had to remind him that it had legs that could move. "Well, do you plan on staying in the elevator?"

"No." Connor blinked. "I'm coming."

The hallway was dark, illuminated only by the light coming through the window at the very end. It seemed dirty and abandoned—definitely a good place for a runaway android to hide. Of course, he didn't know all the details.

"What do we know about this guy?"

"Not much," said Connor from just behind him. "Just that a neighbor reported that he heard strange noises coming from this floor. Nobody's supposed to be living here, but the neighbor said he saw a man hiding an LED under his cap."

Hank had supposed that the so-called strange noises involved the suspect doing or saying something. He never imagined that the noises would actually be caused by the presence of a million and one fucking pigeons in a single apartment.

Upon opening the door to one of the apartment's rooms, he received a faceful of bird and flailed his arms to get them off, bellowing, "What the fuck is this?"

"Pigeons, Lieutenant," said Connor, unperturbed.

"I know they're—" He cut himself off when he got a whiff of all the bird crap littering the room and nearly gagged. "Jesus, this place stinks..."
He reluctantly pressed on even with every one of his instincts telling him to get the fuck out of this potentially disease-ridden apartment. Connor simply followed behind him as he scanned the area and peered into every room, only to find that nobody was there.

"Ugh. Looks like we came for nothing," he huffed. "Our man's gone."

It didn't hurt to look around, since there was now plenty of time to waste. Hank, breathing through his mouth, scoured the area for anything out of the ordinary, which he could barely see because of all the goddamn pigeons getting in his way.

Connor noted almost immediately that the suspect was, in fact, an android, as it had scrawled unusual mazes and rA9 all over the walls like other androids before it, and it had left its LED in the bathroom sink.

"Not surprised it was an android," Hank mumbled. "No human could live with all these fucking pigeons."

(No sane human, anyway.)

He walked into the bathroom to find Connor peering down into the basin, which was full of feathers and blue blood. If the abundance of bird shit in this place wasn't enough to make him dry heave, Connor's decision to 'sample' the sink's contents certainly did the trick.

HURRGH. Bye.

Hank made a quick 180 back into the pigeon-laden living room to look around some more, deciding that anything was better than watching this disgusting dumbass eat the evidence again.

Luckily, his distracted searching turned out to be worthwhile, as the deviant had left some other things behind, including a falsified driver's license. He examined the license curiously, finding that it was nearly indistinguishable from a real one at first glance. It had all the fixings: birth date, address, ID number, even a full name. Rupert Travis... The information must have been randomized during the license's creation, or else it was chosen by the deviant itself, assuming it even had the capability.

Either way, a lot of effort went into creating this fabricated identity. Did deviants typically think this far ahead while they were in hiding? How did it manage to obtain a fake ID, unless it somehow made it itself?

He stared at it, making sure to memorize the face in the photo in case they happened to spot it. This deviant, like the one on the highway, looked more human than not. Though it had a blank expression in the picture, it wasn't the same blankness of regular androids; it was more of a lost look than an expressionless one, like it didn't know what kind of expression to make at all. (Hank could relate. None of his driver's license photos were any good. He was convinced they did it that way on purpose.) It was wearing human clothes as well, including a familiar jacket. Hank was sure he'd just seen that jacket in here somewhere.

He noticed it lying nearby, bitterly shooing away the pigeons that were sitting on top of it. The military-style jacket appeared to have the same initials on it as the name on the license: RT.

At least it wasn't rA9.

He squinted at it in disbelief. "He put his initials on his jacket? That's something your mom does when you're in first grade."

"Deviants have a habit of putting their names on things," Connor noted from nearby as it examined a
fallen bird cage. "It seems important to them."

So Rupert Travis was the name it chose for itself after all. Was that just out of necessity for the license, or had it developed a sense of identity? It made sense if that was the case, seeing that this deviant in particular also seemed to have interests of its own, like reading books and caring for birds that it somehow didn't find as annoying as he did.

He wondered if all deviants were like this. Did they all develop identities and interests, too? Or was this guy just a special case? Either way, it was bizarre. Hank didn't know they could think that way. Really, until just recently, he didn't know they could think at all.

Connor was now slowly walking over to a nearby chair, fixated on something above. Hank forgot about his ruminations on deviants, following its gaze to an opening in the ceiling. He was about to ask if it had seen something in there, until—

CRASH.

A figure fell out of the ceiling and directly onto Connor, sending birds flying in every direction around Hank. He swore as the birds cleared out of view to reveal Connor still on the floor. It stayed there for a second, taken aback by the deviant's sudden appearance as the latter darted out of the apartment and into the hall.

What, now it didn't want to run after deviants all of a sudden?

"What are you waiting for?" Hank yelled, making Connor jump to its feet. "Chase it!"

Connor instantly ran out the door, and Hank followed. He began to head down the corridor to the fire exit that Connor had just burst through, only to find that they were about to cross the urban farm on one of the surrounding rooftops. He decided to intercept it from a different direction (and save himself from a heart attack) by hurrying across the roof to the fire exit stairs on the outside of the building. He figured Connor could handle all the acrobatics the deviant was doing, judging by how determined it was to do impossible things to catch deviants before.

"Detroit Police! Coming through!" he shouted upon entry into the agricultural building, pushing past workers as he hastily searched for any path leading upwards. He found a nearby ladder and climbed it just in time to see Connor appearing in an adjacent field, still hot on the deviant's tail.

Jesus Christ. These things were too fast for him and his cramping stomach. He should have listened to Connor when it told him not to eat that burger.

The deviant crossed above the lavender field and fell off the balcony to stumble down a slope of glass from one of the greenhouses underneath. Just as Hank ran over to the edge of the roof to find out which direction they were going, he saw Connor leaping after it without hesitation, smoothly sliding down the same incline. The moment it reached the edge, it jumped off, landing effortlessly on top of a passing train.

Hank stopped for the briefest moment to catch his breath. "Holy shit."

This fucker had no fear.

He shifted his gaze from his batshit crazy partner and spotted the deviant heading toward some greenhouses that led to the corn fields. It was taking Connor around in a circle... Hank had seen an entrance leading that way on his way over here. Maybe he could get there in time.

It took him longer than he anticipated, but he miraculously managed to intercept the deviant on the
rooftop of the next building over when it got lost through the cornfield.

"Stop right there!"

The moment he attempted to corner the deviant, it accidentally knocked into him before pushing him out of the way, causing him to lose his footing and fall backward into the air—

NO.

He caught himself on the edge before he could fall to his death, holding on for dear life.

Not like this... He wasn't about to get thrown off a rooftop by a goddamn pigeon-loving deviant.

He struggled to pull himself up, his heart thrashing, his grip on the ledge threatening to let go. He desperately looked up and found Connor arriving to the scene, glancing from him to the deviant and back at him again.

Hank didn't know why it was pausing at all. He knew what choice this android was going to make, in the end: Its only mission was to capture the deviant, and nothing mattered to it more than its mission. It was willing to risk its own life just to reach those deviants on the highway, so he didn't doubt that it was willing to risk its partner's, too.

Just as he accepted this, he pushed himself to try to climb the ledge on his own. If he was going to die, he was going to die on his own terms... not as a result of yet another android's inability to care.

But it seemed that this android cared more than he thought, as it unexpectedly tore away from the deviant's path to hurry in his direction. It quickly reached out, grabbing his hand and pulling him up over the ledge, just as the deviant disappeared from view.

"Shit!" Hank gasped as he crawled onto the flat surface. He figured Connor would continue after it now that saving him was out of the way, until he briefly looked over and realized that it was too late. The deviant was gone. "Oh, shit! We had it! Fuck..."

Connor let go of him to let him recover, staring almost wistfully at where it had last seen the deviant run. "It's my fault. I should have been faster."

Was it joking? It was practically stepping on that guy's heels. Jesus.

Feeling oddly guilty, Hank rose to stand, trying to recover his breath. His heart was still pounding in his chest even as it swelled with gratitude. "You'd have caught it if it weren't for me."

Connor only stared back at him, looking almost perplexed. If that was the case, he couldn't blame it. Two deviants lost in one day... He was sure that was enough to get this state-of-the-art deviant-hunting prototype one step closer to spontaneously combusting.

"That's all right," Hank said. "We know what it looks like. We'll find it."

He started to walk back to the stairwell leading down, only to find that Connor wasn't following him like it usually would. It just gazed out at the cornfield, completely still. He wondered what it was thinking yet again.

He knew what he was thinking, though, and he couldn't help himself. "Hey, Connor."

Connor whirled around in one movement to look at him.

He was about to thank it, until he remembered who —rather, what—he was talking to. Any 'thanks'
it received probably didn't matter to this android anyway.

So he waved away the subject. "Nothing."

Connor tilted its head, the light on its temple still spinning and blinking, yellow in color. Hank didn't know what that meant, but he'd only ever seen it when something was wrong with an android, like some kind of software error. Maybe that was what made it catch him instead of the deviant. Maybe it just accidentally made the wrong choice, its program switching a zero with a one or something like that.

Or maybe it really had made the choice itself. Maybe it remembered what Hank had said about putting lives above the mission... But it had never listened to him before. Why would it start now?

He decided not to think about it now, not knowing what to think anymore. He had learned more about androids that day than he had in his whole life, yet they still managed to surprise him.

Apparently, they could surprise themselves, too.
Feeling

Chapter Notes

NOTE: This chapter contains brief depictions of depression/suicidal thoughts.

The next thing that Hank learned about androids was that they could feel.

It yet again took him a while to realize this, partially because he still barely cared about the case as a whole and mostly because his deviant-hunting, unfeeling, insufferable smart-ass of an android partner prevented him from believing it could be true. Although, after the events of that day, he reluctantly figured that maybe 'unfeeling' and 'insufferable' were the wrong words to describe it now. It had, after all, saved his life.

Hank had struggled with the concept of an android going out of its way to do such a thing, flipping back and forth between two reasons: 1) Connor actually sort of cared, or 2) Connor did it because he had to.

His initial reaction—or hope—was to believe the first reason, but the second reason was probably more likely. If it wasn't some sort of error in his program that drove its actions, then it was him just acting because it was what was expected of him.

Even Connor himself seemed to agree with this when Hank asked him later that day why he'd made the choice he had.

"I can't solve this case without you," he stated. "I had to save you."

Well, he certainly knew how to make a guy feel special.

Hank was slightly disappointed to realize that it wasn't empathy but necessity that drove Connor's actions, but he wasn't shocked. Why did he figure it would think any other way? Maybe he'd just been exposed to too many deviants recently. They certainly seemed to have the capacity for something like emotion, so he supposed an irrational part of him thought that Connor would, too.

It was sometimes easy to forget that he—it, Hank reminded himself—was an android. It was unlike any other android he had interacted with, as it looked, talked, and occasionally even acted less robotic than its counterparts. But it didn't take long to see through the facade and realize that it was still an android through and through, driven by logic and reason, seeking only to accomplish the tasks given to it without question, even if it meant hunting down its own kind.

Of course, Connor would say it wasn't its own kind. In its eyes, deviants and androids were two completely separate things. To Hank, they were at least similar in one way: He didn't understand them. He wasn't sure he ever would.

He was getting tired of dealing with them by the end of the day, but it seemed he couldn't get rid of them for even a moment, especially when he returned to the station to drop off their collected evidence.

Connor was 'making a report' again by the time they arrived, so Hank decided to leave it there in the car and head in on his own. His presence was almost instantly noticed, as the moment he walked into
the office area, he heard a call of his name.
"Hey, Anderson!"

He glanced over to see Gavin passing by, gesturing in the direction of Hank's desk.

“Looks like you’ve got a present.”

Judging by his shit-eating grin, Hank had a feeling he wasn't going to like this present at all.

He walked further in, only to let out a groan at the sight of a giant blue crate waiting for him on the floor just beside his desk, blocking the back of his chair. It read CYBERLIFE INC. in perfect white lettering on the side.

Unable to decide if this was either the universe mocking him or just some kind of mistake, Hank looked around for answers. He noticed Fowler trudging out of his office and waved him down.

"Jeffrey!" He gesticulated toward the box with both hands. "What the hell is this?"

"Don't ask me," said Jeffrey lightly. "You're the one who requested it."

"No, I didn't!"

"Well, it was under your name and case number." Jeffrey nodded toward the exit leading into the front lobby. "Your friends from CyberLife just dropped it off."

Absolutely no part of CyberLife was Hank's 'friend.'

He heaved a sigh. "Did they say why?"

"Just said it's for your case. But... whatever it is, it can't stay out here. Move it before someone trips on it."

Could he move it directly into the dump?

He scowled at the back of Jeffrey's head, then down at the crate. He figured it couldn't hurt to take a peek at its contents before deciding what to do with it, so he reluctantly pried open the top, and—

Oh, fucking Christ.

The destroyed remains of an android were inside. The blue blood-spattered body was so damaged that parts of its white skeleton were visible, and it appeared to be missing most of its appendages. Its light blue eyes were still open, simultaneously unseeing and staring into his soul.

He dropped the lid back onto the top, muttering a bewildered "fuck me" under his breath.

“This is the deviant I encountered a few months ago,” said Connor unexpectedly from just behind him, making him nearly jump out of his skin. He didn't even notice it following him inside. “I requested for CyberLife to transfer it to us as potential evidence for the case. I’m not permitted to deposit evidence alone, though, so I had to wait for you to approve it.”

Maybe Hank didn’t want to approve it. Did CyberLife have a return policy?

He turned around to glare at his partner. “As much as I appreciate the help, let me handle the evidence from now on. Okay?”
“Sure.” Connor paused, watching as Hank sourly moved to push the crate across the floor, only to find that it was much heavier than it looked. “Do you need help with it?”

Hank was about to refuse purely out of his own pride, until he felt his muscles aching from all the exercise he’d done that day and sighed in defeat. “Yeah.”

They took the crate downstairs to the evidence room, with Hank dropping it with a grunt the moment he reached the bottom. Trying and failing to hide how out of breath he was from carrying that heavy-ass android down the stairs, he went to the terminal to input his password with his back to Connor, making sure it didn’t see it. Connor didn’t seem to be paying attention anyway, focusing instead on the evidence locker as it began to emerge.

All the evidence they had obtained so far was a video of the first deviant’s confession and the statuette it had created as an offering. The rest that they brought with them from today still wasn’t much of a contribution: physical files on the deviants they encountered so far, an encrypted diary that Connor had found at that pigeon-loving deviant’s hideout, its jacket and fake ID...

And now, apparently, a long-dead android.

"So, how did CyberLife even manage to get this guy back after all this time?" Hank asked as they set down the crate by the opened panel. He already felt winded just carrying it across the room.

“It never left,” Connor replied. "Daniel was the first high-profile case of deviancy to emerge. It’s been a significant part of CyberLife’s recent deviant studies as a result.”

"If it's so important, why'd they just let you have it for this case?"

"Well, because this case is also important."

Debatable.

Hank already felt uncomfortable with the idea of using a body in a glorified coffin as evidence, even if it was just an android body, but he was even more unsettled by the eventual image of the body hanging on the evidence wall as a display.

Connor, in contrast, didn’t seem too perturbed, only staring at it as it stepped back to assess it fully. But then, something in its face changed, and it quickly averted its eyes.

“What is it?” Hank asked, wondering if it had noticed something unusual.

“Nothing,” said Connor. “I was just... recalling how it was destroyed.”

Hank vaguely remembered that it had fallen off the building to meet its end. He couldn’t remember how Connor played into it, though. Back then, he hadn’t cared to know about the fates of the androids, only focusing on the survival of the human hostage.

“Yeah, it’s pretty beat up.” Hank shook his head. “I guess you’d have to be if you jumped off a 70-floor building, huh.”

Connor nodded sagely. “It wasn’t pleasant.”

Hank had thought it just meant it wasn’t pleasant to see when it happened, but when Connor told him that there was footage of the scene and he made the mistake of watching it, he realized he was only half right.
He fiddled with the provided tablet for a few moments (because technology hated him) before finally getting it to play. The video appeared to be in Connor's point of view, likely extracted from its memory. It was facing the deviant, who stood on the other side on the very edge of the terrace, clutching a frightened little girl in one hand and a pointed gun in the other.

The deviant’s range of emotion was on full display even from afar: fear, desperation, anger yet again. Were those the only emotions these deviants could ‘feel,’ or was it just because of their similar circumstances? Hank wondered if deviants could ever be happy.

“What do you remember about it?”

Connor spoke from just beside him. Christ, he needed to teach this thing about personal space.

"The deviant had experienced an emotional shock when it discovered it was going to be replaced by another android,” it stated. “It murdered the father and took the daughter hostage on the roof.”

So this android had deviated after confronting the fact that it was replaceable. Connor had suggested before that they deviated because of a reaction to irrational instructions, but this one, like the others, hadn't received instructions either. Knowing how most people interacted with their family androids, he was sure it probably wasn't even told it was going to be replaced until it found out for itself.

"Why'd it take the daughter hostage? So the police wouldn't try to kill it?"

"Correct. It was also close to self-destruction as a result of its destabilizing software, so it just wasn't thinking rationally," Connor added. "It was so overwhelmed with its emotions that it didn't seem to know what to do with itself."

Hank frowned, glancing back at the footage.

The Connor in the video was working its manipulative magic once more as it slowly advanced toward the deviant and the hostage, its hand held out reassuringly, its words calm and understanding. It all seemed to be going smoothly, until it turned its attention to a wounded cop lying nearby. Its vision of him was abruptly cut off when the memory stuttered into static, then skipped ahead so that it was now standing a few paces closer to the edge, focused on its objective again.

That was weird.

"What happened there?" Hank asked.

Connor didn't respond, staring blankly at its memory. Hank wondered if it looked the same way on-screen as it did in its head.

Its predecessor's continued attempt at sympathy—however fake it was—seemed fairly effective, as the deviant was listening to its every word, responding with emotion of its own. But it wasn't effective enough to make it lower its gun or let the girl go... and, in the end, it wasn't enough to change its mind.

It began to tip backward, and Connor was running out of options.

It hastily lunged forward, pulling the girl's arm to send her back onto the roof while simultaneously shoving the deviant further over the edge. It was unable to catch itself in time, though; just as the deviant fell, so did Connor.

Viewing the fall from its perspective was jarring. Hank felt sick watching it tumble backwards, the
top of the high-rise above shrinking at increasing speeds. Near the end, it must have closed its eyes, as the view turned black just seconds before he heard it abruptly crash into the pavement below with a nauseating *crunch*—

He swore under his breath as the feed cut off into static.

Connor looked more concerned about his shaken reaction than the fact that it had just relived its own demise. "Are you all right, Lieutenant?"

Sure, he was fine. Just needed to erase the last five minutes of his life.

He knew that Connor was determined to do anything to accomplish its mission, but he didn't realize it was willing to die for it. It didn't even blink an eye as it sacrificed itself to save the girl, likely because it was ordered to save her by any means necessary. Did it even know what it was doing? Was it even aware that its own death was a possibility, or did it just not care?

It probably didn't. Hank had to remind himself that death was apparently no big deal to Connor, as proven by its penchant for putting itself in dangerous situations. It could, after all, just be put back together again as if nothing ever happened.

Was that the case for every android, though? Or just fancy prototypes like him? He doubted that deviants had the luxury of having their brains saved by CyberLife. Maybe that was why most of them seemed so fearful. They definitely seemed more aware of themselves and the finality of their fates, even as they risked their lives to escape.

These deviants always wanted to escape in some way. The androids at the highway were the first examples to pop into his head: visibly distressed, gauging what could very well spell out their deaths before running headfirst into it anyway, because doing so was the only way to move forward. Then there was the android with the birds who had done nothing but disappear from society, only to risk its safety trying to disappear again when it was found. Even the deviant he just saw in the video had wanted to escape in its own way, feeling that the only option it had left was to decide its own fate for itself, even at the expense of other lives.

Before, Hank had supposed that the deviants' tendencies to hide and run were just a result of some kind of malfunction that led to irrational behavior like Connor had suggested, but now he had to wonder if there was more to it than they assumed. It wasn't the general disregard for self-preservation that he saw in Connor. It was more like a desperate need for freedom, no matter the cost.

Hank didn't know what to think of this idea or where to start, so he decided to stop thinking about it entirely, knowing that it would just lead to more rumination and unanswered questions. It—along with any other thoughts involving androids—wasn't worth his time... especially now that his shift was over.

When he returned to his desk upstairs to grab his things and get out of dodge, he saw Chris nearby, pulling on his coat.

"Heading home, Hank?"

"Yup." Hank glanced back at Connor, who was lingering by its desk, probably wondering why everyone was leaving with the mission still afoot. "Please tell me you're not going with me."

Connor obliged. "I'm not going with you."

"Good."
He returned his attention to Chris, who knowingly nodded in Connor's direction. "How's your new partner working out?"

"It's a... piece of work," Hank grumbled. "Already chased after deviants twice today."

Chris' eyes widened. "There are really that many deviants running around?"

"Ah, I don't know. Maybe I'm just lucky."

"Huh. Hey, before you go... Ben wanted to let you know that he reached out to that guy the android attacked last night."

"And?"

"He did know about that android kid that was with it... He said it was his daughter."

The fact that he hadn't mentioned the kid in his report made Hank immediately suspicious, mainly because of what Connor had divulged about these android children earlier that day. There was an entire line of these 'perfect' children, with a surplus of them being abandoned after certain amounts of time. If a family didn't want it anymore, they could easily get rid of it and never have to think about it again.

Hank couldn't help but think that maybe that was what had happened to the little girl he saw with the deviant. Maybe the deviant was just trying to save it from getting thrown out like trash. Maybe it was running away to give her a better life that humans couldn't.

He found himself seething about it on his way home. These people just threw these children away, artificial or not, while others would give anything to have a child in their lives. Or, in Hank's case, to get his child back... To tell him he was sorry, that it was all his fault. To see his smile, hear his laugh echoing through the house.

When he got home, he became fully aware of the total absence of that laughter, or any sound at all. The house was quiet. It was empty.

And suddenly, he felt empty, too.

It seemed to happen a lot when he got home from work. Focusing on the details of the investigation usually kept him busy and kept his mind running, thinking about other things all day, but once he got home and found nothing else to occupy his mind, the life would drain out of him again. Any effort he put into his work, or any other aspect of his life, didn't matter anymore. Nothing mattered anymore.

This fact was further reinforced when he turned on the television, hoping to fill the silence with background noise while he got his dinner, only to hear news segments of all the hopeless things in the world: unemployment statistics, psychological studies of increased rates of depression, the possibility of an oncoming World War III... He didn't want to hear any more about the world going to shit, but he didn't have the energy to change the channel at this point, so he just tuned it out, focusing his attention on the picture of Cole he always kept on the kitchen table.

He didn't feel very hungry anymore. He pushed away his dinner plate and reached instead for his bottle of whisky, which was sitting just beside the gun he placed with his badge on the table. He started downing it, hoping it would numb him to the point of no longer caring. The warmth and numbness didn't take long to engulf him, but with it also came a potent feeling of hollowness that he couldn't shake. So he drank even more to fill it.
He didn't know when he'd grabbed the gun, only realizing at some point that it was now in his grip. He held it up to eye level, blankly spinning the cartridge.

Many times, he had been tempted to pull the trigger on himself, knowing there was nothing left for him in this life—but every time, he resisted. Because, really, he didn't want to die... He was just tired of living. He was tired of the thoughts eating away at him, and he just wanted it to stop. He wanted to escape this messed-up, hopeless world however he could. Part of him, however, was too much of a coward to make that escape happen, and another part of him kept holding on to the tiniest shred of his own misplaced hope that maybe things might get better.

Right now, though, that hope was hard to reach, and the numbness made him much less of a coward now.

So did Russian Roulette.

It took him a while of gaping at the gun in his grasp before his drunken mind decided that playing it sounded like a good idea. Sure, it wasn't a rational one, but thinking rationally was an android's job. Russian Roulette wasn't about being rational. It was about giving both conflicting outlooks in his head a chance: the temptation of pulling the trigger versus the hope that no bullet would fire. If it never fired, he'd live to see another day. If it did, then... well, he wouldn't be around to care, would he?

His body didn't seem to agree with his decision. The moment he firmly placed the end of the gun against the side of his head, he felt his grip on it loosening, his head feeling strangely light. He then felt himself beginning to sway in his chair, until suddenly—

Everything went black.

He didn't know whether he was out for five minutes or five hours. All he knew was that the next time he woke, someone else was in the room with him.

"Lieutenant?"

A hand lightly patted him on the cheek. He didn't really feel it or care about it, so he began to drift off again.

"Wake up, Lieutenant," said the voice again.

Hank stirred once more with a groan, briefly cracking his eyes open as he turned his head, only to find that he was on the floor. How'd he end up here?

Oh well. Wasn't important. He was pretty comfortable anyway. Maybe he could just stay here for a few more minutes...

Yeah... Just a few more—

WHACK.

An abrupt slap to the face made his eyes snap open. His cheek now stinging, he blinked rapidly before squinting at the intruder: a blurry figure blocking the ceiling light, somehow familiar, especially when it spoke.

"It's me, Connor!"

Connor. Connor? But Connor was dead...
Wait, no. He died a few months ago. He was fine now.

Every curse Hank knew played in his head on a loop when realization finally hit. What was this android doing in his house? And why was it slapping him in the goddamn face?

"I'm going to sober you up for your own safety," it stated.

Hank let out an uncontrollable grunt as Connor pulled his arm around its neck to lift him up. Just that small movement made his stomach lurch, his vision seeing double before returning to normal again.

"Hey—"

"I have to warn you, this may be unpleasant."

"Leave me alone, you fuckin' android!" Hank slurred. Connor didn't respond, only staring at him, its plastic face entirely too close. "Get the fuck outta my house."

"I'm sorry, Lieutenant, but I need you." It struggled to bring him to his feet. He could barely stand when it did, his legs feeling like jelly. "Thank you in advance for your cooperation."

Smart-ass... no-good... piece of plastic... still wouldn't listen to him...

Maybe it just couldn't hear him.

"Hey, get the FUCK OUTTA HERE!"

He'd bellowed this with such force that he started flailing backwards out of Connor's hold, until it caught him and pulled him upright again.

He was sure that it was ignoring him, like it always did. It just kept trying to walk him out of the kitchen, no matter how much he protested. Sumo was watching curiously from his napping spot nearby.

"Sumo!" Hank called. Just like we practiced, all right? "Attack!"

Sumo barked.

Close enough. "Good dog."

Connor led him into the bathroom, sitting him down on the edge of the bathtub.

"I don't wanna bath." Hank moved to get to his feet. "Thank you."

"Sorry, Lieutenant." The asshole pushed him back down. "It's for your own good."

The fuck was it about to—

COLD! COLD COLD COLD!

Connor stared at him for a few beats as he screamed to turn off the water (was it enjoying his misery?) before it finally turned the knob.

Well, Hank was definitely awake now.

As he recovered from the onslaught of cold water that so rudely jolted his system, he narrowed his eyes at Connor, who was still standing there. Why was it still here? Why was it even here in the first
place?

"What the fuck are you doing here?"

"A homicide was reported 43 minutes ago," said Connor. Its loud, confident tone wasn't helping his hurting head. "I couldn't find you at Jimmy's Bar, so I came to see if you were at home."

Android bullshit translation: I have to complete my mission right now, so I stalked you and broke into your house. There's no time to waste!

"Jesus." Hank sighed, picking himself up to sit on the edge of the tub. He still felt wobbly, but at least he could think a little more clearly. Not much, but a little. "I must be the only cop in the world who gets assaulted in his own house by his own fucking android." He looked up at the android in question, who still couldn't seem to grasp that he didn't want it there. "Can't you just leave me alone?"

"Unfortunately, I cannot," Connor replied. "I've been programmed to investigate this case and I can't do it without you."

It couldn't even let him take a break, could it? "I don't give a shit about your goddamn case."

"Lieutenant, you're not yourself. You should—"

"Beat it! You hear me?" Hank spat, jumping to his feet. "Get the hell outta here!"

Whoa. Standing up that fast made him dizzy. Connor caught him before he could fall on his face and lightly set him back down to sit on the edge of the tub.

It gazed at him as he recovered, its head doing that inquisitive tilting thing again. Then, at long last, it turned to leave, but not without some parting words.

"I understand. It probably wasn't interesting anyway... A man found dead at a sex club downtown..." It made a casual shrug. "Guess they'll have to solve the case without us!"

Was this thing trying to be funny? Waving the case in front of him like it was tempting or something... Well, it wasn't. Not even a little.

...

Okay, maybe a little. Dead man at a sex club... You didn't see that every day.

"You know," he said, "it probably wouldn't do me any harm to get some air."

He ordered Connor to get him some clean clothes and was prepared to follow it out of the bathroom, until another wave of nausea hit that he couldn't ignore this time. He stumbled over to the toilet and collapsed in front of it just as he started to vomit. He only then became aware of just how much his entire body hurt—his throat burning, his head pounding. Not to mention his face still stinging from an android's precise slap.

Ugh. This was not a good day.

Just as Hank finished another wave of vomiting, he heard Connor's voice from the other room.

"Sorry about the window, Lieutenant. I really thought you'd been attacked. Of course, CyberLife will pay for the damage."
God damn it. It broke his window?

"Yeah, trust me," he called. "I'll send 'em a bill."

His sickness was finally letting up, so he lifted his head to rest his chin on the toilet seat, trying to will himself to get up. He found himself much less willing when Connor spoke up again, sounding almost incredulous.

"What were you doing with the gun?"

"Russian Roulette," Hank replied. Might as well be honest. "Wanted to see how long I could last. Guess I collapsed before I... found out."

There was a weighty pause on Connor's end. Hank wondered what it thought about something as irrational as a potentially deadly game of chance. Probably couldn't even compute the idea of it in its logical robot brain.

"You were lucky," it said at last. "The next shot would have killed you."

Hank felt the color drain from his face. The realization that he had been close to actually killing himself in a drunken stupor made his heart drop into his stomach, which started lurching again.

It took him a while to feel like he didn't have to throw up every five seconds. He waited a few minutes after his last regurgitation before he finally got to his feet, figuring that was the last of it. He noticed that Connor had already placed a neatly folded pile of clothes onto the bathroom sink, so he shuffled over to try it on, hoping it would stay that clean the whole time.

When he walked out of the bathroom, he noticed that Connor had been snooping around in his absence. His fallen gun and bottle had been picked up, with the bottle placed on the kitchen table and the gun next to his badge on the counter. It had even cleaned up whatever broken glass from the window was probably on the floor. Cole's photo had been upturned as well, causing Hank to scowl at the idea of Connor knowing about him. He hoped it wouldn't feel compelled to ask any more 'personal questions.'

He ventured into the living room to see what Connor was getting into this time, only to find it crouched down next to Sumo, petting him. Hank could have sworn he saw it smile when Sumo made a soft groan in response to its touch.

Hmm. Maybe it actually did like dogs. Hank didn't know androids could like anything. He'd figured that was just something it said way back when to get on his good side, or some aspect of its program that made it more relatable to humans.

"You're the worst attack dog, Sumo," he said coolly, catching Connor's attention.

"He did try to protect you when I got here," it admitted. "But he left me alone because I knew his name."

Damn it. He never should have told it about him.

Hank sighed. "Ready to go?"

Connor nodded and got to its feet, while Sumo walked away from it to sniff Hank. He probably still smelled like booze.

"Be a good dog, Sumo. I won't be long."
Connor followed him out the door and to the car, only to pause when it noticed Hank gripping at his pounding head.

"Lieutenant," it began gently.

"Yeah, you can drive this time," Hank murmured.

Connor moved around to the driver's seat, while Hank plopped into the passenger seat with a groan.

"All right... Which club?"

"Eden Club," said Connor.

Eden Club? That place with the—

Oh, hell. The android sex club?

Hank put his head in his hands. "Wonderful."

He noticed Connor glancing at him out of the corner of his vision. Eyes on the road, asshole. "Are you... able to continue with the investigation tonight, Lieutenant?"

"Well, I have no choice, do I?" he grumbled. "You broke into my house to get me out of it. No going back now."

If he had to throw up again, he'd just direct it onto Connor. He was sure it wouldn't mind.

It felt like it took them forever to get there (probably because his headache was putting everything in slow motion), but they finally did, parking directly in front of it. The club sat proudly with its bright neon lights, sticking out like a sore thumb against the dark backdrop of the road. The lights nearly blinded him as he propped open the door and accidentally bumped his already hurting head.

There was a police presence at the scene, which made him feel slightly better about not being alone surrounded by all these sex androids.

Just as he and Connor stepped through the holographic crime scene tape blocking the entrance, he stopped to read the motto on the flashing signs leading to the door.

"'The sexiest androids in town.'" Smirking a little, he glanced back at Connor. "Now I know why you insisted on coming here."

Connor only blinked in response. Hank figured it wouldn't understand since it was so focused on the mission at hand, but he couldn't help but wonder if deviants were different. They seemed to look at things from a more 'human' perspective, if what he surmised about them was true... Maybe they desired some kind of companionship, too?

He didn't want to think about it. He just wanted to investigate and go so he could nurse this ridiculous hangover and forget about all of this.

"Oh boy," he mumbled as the doors opened to reveal androids on display in glass cases on both sides of the entrance, with others dancing on poles in the middle. The lights were dimmer inside, but they still blinded him again, making him avert his eyes to the shiny floor, which didn't help either.

"Hey, Hank," called Ben from just outside one of the occupied rooms. Hank was relieved to see a familiar face. "It's that room there. Oh, by the way... Gavin's in there, too."
"Oh, great." Now his headache was never gonna go away. "A dead body and an asshole, just what I needed."

He and Connor ventured into the room to find the human headache in question standing above a body on the floor. There was another body inside that Hank didn't remember being mentioned; he realized why when he saw that it was one of the androids that worked there. What happened to it?

"Lieutenant Anderson and his plastic pet," sneered Gavin. "The fuck are you two doin' here?"

"We've been assigned all cases involving androids," said Connor simply.

"Oh, yeah?" For some reason, the way Gavin seemed to mock Connor made Hank want to punt him across the room like a football. "Well, you're wasting your time. Just some pervert who, uh, got more action than he could handle."

He laughed, causing Hank to force a bitter smile. "We'll have a look anyway, if you don't mind."

Gavin nudged Chris. "Come on, let's go. It's, uh... It's starting to stink of booze in here."

He knocked into Connor's shoulder on his way out, causing Connor to look pointedly at his retreating back. Hank thought it might offer Gavin one of its special smart-ass remarks in response, but it said nothing, getting to work examining the body instead. Maybe it just preferred to save all its smart-ass remarks for Hank.

Hank got to work, too, searching the room for any evidence while Connor did the dirty work up close. In passing, he noticed that there were bruises on the victim's neck, paired with bloodshot eyes. Possible strangling?

He ventured over to a nearby table, which had a number of drinks lined up in front of a "choose your fantasy" panel. Used to it showing up frequently at crime scenes, he searched for any possible traces of Red Ice, only to find none. Instead, he noticed the victim's wallet among its clothes on the edge. He gingerly picked it up, sifting through it in hopes of identifying the victim.

"Driver's license says: Michael Graham... A credit card, cash in the wallet." He grimaced when he flipped through to a family photo. "Picture of his wife and two daughters. I wouldn't want to make that call."

Connor didn't seem to hear him as it rose to stand. "He didn't die of a heart attack... He was strangled."

"Yeah," Hank muttered. "I saw the bruising on the neck. Doesn't prove anything though. Could've just been rough play."

He knew androids were stronger than most humans (if Connor's well-meaning wake-up slap was any indication), so it wouldn't surprise him if it was some kind of accident... But if this this guy was strangled, on purpose or otherwise, it didn't explain why the potential killer was also dead on the other side of the room.

Connor seemed to be thinking the same thing, as it made a beeline for the fallen android, crouching down beside it to examine it. Hank trudged over curiously, seeing that it had been damaged at some point, with blue blood seeping out of its nose.

Connor reached out to sample it with its fingers.

_Don't_—Ugh.
"Connor, you're so disgusting," he said as Connor innocently tasted the blood. He was never going to get used to that. "I think I'm gonna puke again."

Connor ignored his words (as usual) as it moved to press the same bloodied fingers against the android's LED. It paused to comprehend its analysis.

"Two of its biocomponents were critically damaged a few minutes before the victim's death." It frowned, looking from the android to the victim. "We're missing something here."

Hank remembered it mentioning something about probing that android at the interrogation for information... That could be useful.

"You think you could read the android's memory? Maybe you can see what happened."

"The only way to access its memory is to reactivate it."

Hank didn't know why he was surprised that a dead android could be reactivated. He was, after all, talking to a ghost itself.

"Think you can do it?" he asked.

"It's badly damaged," said Connor as it opened the stomach of the android to reveal a loose connection leaking more blue blood. "If I can, it'll only be for a minute, maybe less. I just hope it's long enough to learn something."

The moment Connor reconnected it, the android jolted awake with a gasp.

Yet again, Hank was confronted with the fact that these androids could be afraid, or at least act like it. This one's eyes were wide with terror, her broken body nearly hyperventilating as she crawled away from their unfamiliar faces and pressed her back to the wall, unable to get any farther away from them.

Connor crouched down in front of her, holding out its hand in reassurance. "You were damaged and I reactivated you. Everything is all right."

"Is he..." The android swallowed, her eyes darting to the body nearby. "Is he dead?"

A little bit.

"Tell me what happened," said Connor.

Question after question, Connor finally got the information out. She had been physically abused by the victim, but she didn't kill him. So who did?

"He wanted to play with two girls," she—*it*, Hank reminded himself again—stammered. "That's what he said, there was two of us..."

"What model was the other android?" asked Connor quickly. "Did it look like you?"

The android didn't answer. Its eyes suddenly became glassy, its red LED fading until it turned off completely. It was gone.

Connor leaned back in frustration.

So another android had likely killed the victim. Hank wasn't expecting that they would be able to find it, considering how long ago this had happened... Then again, most deviants they investigated...
always seemed to stay close to the scene of the crime.

Connor affirmed this thought when it suggested that the suspect was still hiding there. But there were tons of androids around... Finding one deviant among them was possible, but definitely tricky.

"There's gotta be some other way... Maybe an eyewitness? Someone who saw it leaving the room." Hank headed out the door. "I'm gonna go ask the manager a few questions about what he saw. You let me know if you think of anything."

As expected, it didn't take long for Connor to do just that. Not two minutes after Hank started talking to the manager (and losing even more faith in humanity as a result), it walked over to interrupt.

"Excuse me, Lieutenant... Can you come here a second?"

"Found something?"

"Maybe."

Hank followed it over to one of the androids on display. It motioned to it. "Can you rent this Traci?"

What the hell?

"For fuck's sake, Connor, we have more important things to do."

"Please, Lieutenant." Connor looked at him imploringly. "Just trust me."

He had no reason to trust this thing after it trespassed his home, but, for some reason, he trusted it anyway. He grudgingly obliged, putting a dent in his expense account in the process. Maybe CyberLife could pay for his window and this entire goddamn investigation.

Connor set out to work its magic, grabbing the Traci tightly by the arm, the synthetic skin on its hand changing to a smooth white. It blinked for a few seconds, its LED flashing, before it abruptly let go.

"It saw something," it said immediately.

That was fast.

"What are you talking about? Saw what?"

"The deviant leave the room... A blue-haired Traci. Club policy is to wipe the androids' memory every two hours. We only have a few minutes if we want to find another witness."

God damn it. Why couldn't just one of these investigations be easy? Especially one where he felt like his head was getting a hole drilled in it from the inside?

Connor moved out on its mission, searching for other androids to probe. Hank, meanwhile, glanced uneasily at the Traci beside him, who was still looking at him expectantly, gesturing to a nearby room.

"Hey," he called to Connor. "What am I supposed to do with this one?"

"Tell it you changed your mind!"

Fine.

He looked back at the Traci, his voice trailing. "Uh... sorry, honey. Changed my mind. Nothing
personal, you're... a lovely girl. I just, uh... You know... I'm with him and... I mean, not with him like that... I'm not that... That's not what I..." Jesus Christ. "I mean... I just..."

Why was he getting flustered about this?

"Bye," he concluded, moving quickly to where his partner stood nearby.

It had just finished reading the memory of one of the pole dancers when he came over. It noticed his arrival and nodded toward another room. "It saw the blue-haired Traci. I know which way it went."

"Okay, and then what?" Hank asked, following it through the entrance. "There are androids everywhere. How are you gonna tell which one saw it?"

"I know which direction it took... I just need to find another android on its path."

It seemed to know exactly where to go and who to go to, continuing its method of madness a few more times in more dimly-lit display rooms. Hank was a little bitter about this method, with too much of his hard-earned money being spent getting these androids out of their tubes, but even he couldn't deny that it was working.

It was also batshit crazy. Of all the ways he thought this investigation would go, he never expected that he'd end up paying for his android partner to read the minds of a trail of sex robots to lead it to where the suspect was last seen. Then again, he hadn't expected a lot of things about the past day or two, so he had no reason to be shocked at this rate.

Their search led them to the back of the building, still without any blue hair in sight. Hank was about to suggest leaving this dead end when Connor decisively stepped away from probing the android janitor.

"I know where it went!" It sounded almost excited about it as it headed toward the staff door nearby. "Follow me."

They opened the door to reveal a warehouse full of dormant androids and supplies. Hank searched around, wondering if it was hiding, but he didn't see any blue hair anywhere. There was an exit just outside, already opened. It probably fled that way.

Hank hurried over to it and found nobody there. "Shit. We're too late!"

Connor seemed determined to yet again prove him wrong. It continued on into the room, scanning its surroundings thoughtfully. Hank followed suit, figuring it couldn't hurt to look around on the other side.

Out-of-commission androids were standing in lines all around, unaware of their states. Surrounding them were costumes, boxes, and tables, one of which had an android lying on it, probably after getting repaired. He wondered how many of the patrons there tended to rough them up like the victim did.

"Christ, look at them," he huffed as Connor stooped down to examine something on the floor. "They get used 'til they break, and then they get tossed out."

The androids here were just toys in their boxes, ripe for the picking, unaware of where they were or what they were doing. He would have figured that people wouldn't be so comfortable with this sort of thing, seeing that they at least looked human enough for actual humans to see something wrong with it, but they just ate this shit up. After all, androids were there to do whatever they wanted without talking back or sharing any opinions of their own... They were much easier to deal with than
complicated things like relationships or love. In fact, as far as humanity was concerned, love didn't exist anymore.

This place made him sick to his stomach. He hoped they could find this deviant soon so they could go already.

Connor was still on its mission to find it, laser-focused on the floor as it slowly sneaked toward the back of the room. Hank remembered it saying something about blue blood becoming invisible to human eyes after a certain amount of time. Maybe there was a trail he couldn't see.

(There was.)

Suddenly, the sound of metal hitting metal reverberated behind him. He turned around to see one of the androids attacking Connor, shoving it back against the wall.

He dashed over, pointing his gun at the deviant. "Don't move!"

No, that wasn't the deviant... She didn't have blue hair. Where—

_Oof_. He doubled over at a knee to the stomach.

Found her.

Connor and the short-haired Traci started clashing nearby, but Hank didn't get the chance to help, too occupied with the blue-haired one, who was trying to get him away from them both.

Hank gritted his teeth as he ripped himself out of her grip. He attempted to shove her away the same moment she did the same to him, which caused them both to lose their balance, staggering backwards. Hank caught himself on a nearby cart with a box on it and looked up to see the deviant falling among some of the dormant androids standing in a line behind her.

It didn't take long for her to recover. She almost instantly picked herself up and started charging toward Hank with determined strides. He scrambled to grab the rolling cart beside him and push it in her direction to slow her down. His efforts were useless, as she hurtled over the cart without hesitation and seized him by the scruff of the neck the second she got close, forcing him face-first into a corner.

Fucking hell. Why did _he_ have to fight the relentless one?

After getting a good grip on him, the relentless one whirled around with him in tow, but Hank didn't make it easy, struggling against her hold each step of the way until he swiftly managed to knock her against the edge of a nearby table. She responded by effortlessly picking him up off his feet and dropping himonto it with an audible _clang_.

As the deviant held him down, she lifted her gaze to gauge how her like-minded partner was doing. Hank jerked his head over to look as well, spotting Connor still sparring with the deviant near the warehouse door. Connor's attempt to pull her away ended up with them both slipping off the platform that led outside, landing clumsily on the concrete.

The deviant with Hank let in a sharp breath and abruptly rolled him to the side so that he fell off the table with a pained grunt. He picked himself up and rushed toward the exit where he last saw her heading, only to find her hurrying to help the fallen deviant to her feet. They noticed his arrival and turned to face him, holding hands.

_Holding hands?_
Hank's blip of bewilderment at this image distracted him a split second long enough for the hand-holding deviants to push him back against the wall behind him. Just as he collapsed into some trash bins, his gun slipped from his iron grip, clattering onto the ground a few paces away.

He struggled to sit up, somewhat dizzy, his head feeling like it was being ripped apart. God, he really needed to stop drinking before investigating, especially if he was just going to drop his weapon in plain sight.

Evidently, these androids were adept at kicking both their asses, as Connor was still recovering from its own scuffle nearby. It jumped to its feet just as the deviants started to make a break for it toward the fence.

"Quick, they're getting away!" Hank yelled.

Connor obeyed, catching up with them and pulling one of them off the fence just as they started to climb over it. The other deviant, despite being close to freedom, leaped off the top of the fence to protect her.

It was when Hank saw them fighting Connor two-on-one that he finally managed to pick himself up and stumble over to where the gun lay on the ground.

But Connor made it there first, snatching up the gun before he could. It whirled around, pointing it at the short-haired deviant just as she began to charge.

Hank fully expected Connor to shoot her, knowing that it probably the only option it could see. The only other possible option was to let her escape, but Connor had lost so many deviants already that day. It wasn't about to lose two more.

Without knowing why, Hank didn't want to see it happen. He averted his eyes, expecting to hear the sound of a gun firing any second.

It never fired.

Hank looked up, wondering wildly if something had happened to prevent it, only to find that Connor was preventing itself, slowly lowering the weapon instead of shooting.

The charging deviant hadn't expected the fight to stop, of course, so Connor's hesitation was rewarded with a gnarly kick to the face (which Hank couldn't say it didn't deserve).

That was the last attack the deviants made, however. They seemed to take note of Connor's inaction, cautiously walking over as a result.

Then, to Hank's surprise, the blue-haired deviant began to confess. She spoke of the man who abused the other android, how scared she was, how she just wanted to escape without being destroyed, too.

"I didn't mean to kill him," she said intently. "I just wanted to stay alive... Get back to the one I love."

Love?

She took the other girl's hand into her own, holding her close. As Hank trudged over, still out of breath from the fight, he hardly paid attention to her words about wanting to get away from humans. All he cared to notice was how they looked into each other's eyes, something familiar in their shared gaze. It was something tender, something emotional.
Something... strangely human.

The sight seemed to perplex Connor as much as it did Hank. It was frozen in place, not acting to stop them, only watching silently as the other girl nodded back toward the fence.

"Come on," she said softly. "Let's go."

The blue-haired one offered them a knowing smile before heading to the fence to make her escape.

Connor let her go.

It must have felt Hank's stare, as it warily looked back at him, its LED spinning from blue to yellow. Confusion appeared on its face yet again—and, after all that Hank had just seen, he started to believe it might actually feel it this time.

Hank was confused too, for different reasons.

First, he believed that androids couldn't feel. Then, after finding out they sort of could, he believed that what they felt wasn't real, just as Connor had suggested. Now, after witnessing androids in love, he didn't know what to believe except that love was real. Love was a human emotion, a concept that unfeeling robots could never understand, yet these robots understood it perfectly... How was that possible?

Hank didn't know, but he had to believe that this was real, or at least it was real to them. They wouldn't be faking this for sympathy when there was no longer any perceived threat against them, and they certainly wouldn't be making such an effort to protect each other if none of it meant anything to them.

In the end, it seemed that all they really wanted was to survive and leave their past behind together... and, despite everything, Hank wasn't going to stop them. He was almost glad to see them go.

"It's probably better this way," he said.

Connor glanced from him to where the deviants were last seen, unable to process what that meant or what it had just let happen. Hank decided to let it work it out for itself, turning to go back inside and let Ben know that they got a confession.

Connor was quiet for a long time after that, just as it was after saving Hank earlier that day. It still seemed perplexed, even lost... and Hank couldn't blame it, considering that this was the third time this deviant-catching android had seen its suspects go free in one day. Once because it had no choice, and twice more because it made the choice to let them go.

At this point, Hank thought he'd had Connor halfway figured out, but apparently, figuring it out was an impossible task. Shit, this thing couldn't even figure itself out -- or at least it couldn't figure out its own priorities. It was always saying that its mission to stop these deviants was important and it was willing to do anything to accomplish it, yet when it had the opportunity to do so, it didn't take it. It might have had a reason to save Hank from falling, but there sure as hell wasn't any logical reason to let these deviants go. So what was it trying to accomplish?

The fact that he was even having to wonder about that was frustrating. How was he ever gonna figure out a case about androids if he couldn't even figure out his own partner?

Ugh. This was all just making his head hurt worse. He wished he could be numb again.

He stopped at the playground by the bridge that he always used to go to with Cole, taking a bottle of
beer with him. Connor lingered in its seat, probably still stewing over its decisions, so he decided to leave the radio on for it to listen to as he got out of the car. He remembered it saying back at the station that it had wanted to start listening to music.

He heaved a sigh as he sat on top of the bench that overlooked the bridge, staring at the view of the city across from him. He stayed there in silence for a long time before the muffled noise from the car eventually cut off, followed by hesitant footsteps crunching in the newly fallen snow behind him.

Connor stopped to stand next to him, gazing out at the city skyline, just as he was.

"Nice view, huh?" Hank mused. "I used to come here a lot... before."

Connor turned its head to look at him, then at the bottle hanging loosely in his grasp. "You should stop drinking. It could have serious consequences for your health."

Of course it would take this moment as a chance to lecture him.

He made a small shrug as he lifted the bottle to his lips. "That's the idea."

He could feel Connor staring at him as it registered his words. It cautiously crossed its arms over its chest, almost like it was cold. "Can I ask you a personal question, Lieutenant?"

Hank knew this was coming. No investigation with this android was complete without it asking a personal question at least once.

He eyed it. "Do all androids ask so many personal questions, or is it just you?"

His reply must have been taken as a yes, for Connor asked its personal question anyway.

"Why are you so determined to kill yourself?"

Hank should have known this asshole would ask something like that eventually. He was torn between wishing it would mind its own business and strangely wanting to answer, just to take the chance to talk about it for once in his life.

His answer came out before he could decide.

"Some things I just can't forget," he mumbled. "Whatever I do, they're always there... Eating away at me. I don't have the guts to pull the trigger, so I kill myself a little every day." He put on a grim smile, figuring this logic made no sense to the android beside him. "That's probably difficult for you to understand, huh, Connor? Nothing very rational about it."

When he was met with silence, he glanced over to gauge its reaction, only to find something unusual in its expression: a muddled mix of something like confusion or concern, only barely hidden when it faced forward again. It didn't pry any further, perhaps sensing that it was a sensitive topic.

Hank figured it wouldn't take long for this one-track mind to focus on the mission again, and he was right. It remained where it stood for a few more moments before it decisively walked out toward the bridge, sounding somewhat frustrated about their lack of progress on the investigation.

"The deviants have nothing in common," it said. "They're all different models, produced at different times, in different places."

Hank was more than happy to change the subject. "Well, there must be some link."

These deviants didn't just get this way randomly. He once thought that to be the case, but now he
wasn't so sure.

If there was a link, it wasn't apparent. The circumstances were different. The crimes were different. The androids themselves were different. The only plausible link he could see so far was just a common behavior that all the deviants seemed to share: They were all motivated by their emotions.

He had always been told and assumed that these androids only simulated emotion to get humans to trust them, but none of these deviants used emotion as a tool. Emotion seemed more like a side effect of their circumstances—anger as they lashed out against their owners, fear as they tried to run away. Not performative, only reactive.

Hank still didn't know if these emotions were real, but they certainly seemed real to the ones who felt them. To them and to Hank, who had been so sure that they couldn't feel at all, maybe that was enough.

Connor thought about it, its voice trailing at its next suggestion. "We know the deviants experienced... an emotional shock, a violent trauma or a sense of injustice."

Hank hated to admit it, but Connor was right: As far as they knew, all of the deviants they had found had experienced some form of shock or trauma. Ortiz's android had been physically abused for months. The AX400 and the child lived with someone who showed signs of Red Ice usage from his interview alone, making Hank suspect the possibility of abuse again. Rupert Travis hid from humans for years, probably because he was scared of them. And then those Tracis having to deal with abuse from their clients until they couldn't take it anymore...

The implication that these kinds of situations might be the cause of deviancy made Hank suddenly ill, especially given the idea that these androids might be more aware of things than he thought. He couldn't speak, lowering his gaze to the snowy ground, gripping the bottle in his hand more tightly.

The most recent experience played on a loop inside his head, showing the fear in these deviants' eyes. The fear in the eyes of the girl who had been beaten to a pulp... The fear in the blue-haired one's eyes as she recalled how scared she had been when the violence began... The fear in both deviants' eyes as they faced their pursuers, so close to escaping the life they never wanted but unable to do so without a fight.

"Those girls at the Eden Club sure had a reason to feel a sense of injustice," he murmured.

Connor turned around to look at him.

"You seem preoccupied, Lieutenant. Is it something to do with what happened back at the Eden Club?"

"Those two girls," Hank said quietly. "They just wanted to be together. They really seemed... in love."

It felt bizarre to even acknowledge this out loud. Love was a very human trait, even if humans didn't show it much these days. Love was something he would never expect to find in robots, not even malfunctioning ones like deviants were... But at the same time, finding that kind of human trait in them wasn't entirely surprising. Hank had, after all, seen a lot of human things in deviants today: the emotions they expressed, the way they carried themselves, the fact that they had thoughts, interests, desires, identities, relationships—all of which were things that he thought were exclusive to humans, too.

But they weren't. Or they didn't seem to be. And that fact alone made Hank start to wonder if calling
these deviants just 'malfunctioning robots' was even the right way to go about this. If they really could do all these things, if they really could love, then...

Well, maybe there was more to them than he thought. More than anyone thought.

Connor disagreed.

"They can simulate human emotions," it stated, "but they're machines. And machines don't feel love. They don't feel anything."

Hank wasn't sure he believed that anymore. If he had learned anything about androids that day, it was that they could feel something. Ultimately, it didn't matter if that something was considered real emotion or not. It affected these deviants the same way it might affect humans, shaping their thoughts and actions.

And now, as he watched his android partner fervently assure him that that wasn't the case, he found himself starting to wonder if it wasn't just the deviants who were affected.

Hank had seen emotion in Connor before. It was small, barely noticeable as it came in flickers: Curiosity. Confusion. Disappointment. Frustration. Concern. Was it the fake emotion it put on during interrogations? Was it just a simulation as Connor itself had suggested androids could do? Or was it really the same kind of emotion that all these deviants showed?

Some part of Hank strangely hoped that it was the latter, if only because he was tired of the opposite being true.

After taking a long swig, Hank decisively set down his bottle and hopped off the bench, regarding Connor with narrowed eyes. Connor only stared back.

"What about you, Connor? You look human... You sound human. But what are you really?"

Connor gave him a spiel about being whatever he wanted it to be, but that was what it was supposed to say. It was programmed to adapt to anything and anyone, human and android alike. Hank wasn't asking it to mold itself to human expectations, though. That wasn't what his question meant.

It looked and sounded human, but just how human was it on its own? Did it feel any of the confusion that kept showing on its face? Did it feel any empathy for the deviants it pursued? Did it feel anything at all?

It had to feel something. If it didn't feel anything, it would have continued its efforts to accomplish its mission like nothing else mattered, just like had done many times before. It wouldn't have saved its partner from falling to his death when it had the deviant it was chasing in plain sight. It wouldn't have spared those girls at the Eden Club when it had the chance to shoot. It wouldn't have let them go when it had every reason to stop them. And it wouldn't be trying to convince anyone that machines didn't feel... In fact, it seemed more like it was trying to convince itself.

"You could've shot those two girls, but you didn't." Hank gritted his teeth and shoved Connor's shoulder. It stumbled back in slight surprise. "Why didn't you shoot, Connor? Some scruples suddenly enter into your program?"

"No." Connor's expression was unreadable when it responded, perhaps not expecting its own words. "I just decided not to shoot. That's all."

"Yeah? And did you decide to let 'em go, too?" Hank reached out to push Connor again, but it was way ahead of him, taking a preemptive step back so that he missed. He huffed, his breath visible in
the cold. "You had every chance to catch them and take them in like you were supposed to, but you didn't do that, either... What's the matter, Connor? Some kind of glitch in your software making you actually feel something for these deviants?"

The light on Connor's temple was starting to change colors again.

"Lieutenant... I think you should stop drinking tonight," it told him yet again. "It's making you think irrationally."

It was purposefully not answering him. Of course it wasn't, because it knew that it had been irrational, too... It was just too afraid to acknowledge it.

What else was Connor afraid of?

Hank suddenly wanted that fear to come out. He wanted to see it in its eyes, to prove not only to Connor but to himself that it could feel at all.

So he drew his gun, pointing it directly at its forehead.

Connor only stared back, unblinking.

"I could kill you," Hank hissed, "and you'd just come back as if nothing happened. But are you afraid to die, Connor?"

Sure, it had faced death before, but that didn't mean it couldn't be afraid of it. Did it remember how it felt when it fell 70 floors toward its demise? How did it feel about doing all the impossible things it did for the sake of its mission, like running into a highway or leaping onto a moving train? Did that scare it? Did anything?

Connor seemed unable to find the right words for a few moments, until it finally answered, almost hesitantly.

"I would certainly find it regrettable to be... interrupted," it said, "before I can finish this investigation."

This wasn't about the investigation anymore.


Connor didn't speak at first, its LED blinking intermittently, as if it had never thought about this before. Hank realized then that it probably hadn't; it probably just did what it had to do without being aware of any repercussions, without even being aware of itself.

But he was aware now. Something seemed to dawn on him as he slowly met Hank's gaze.

"Nothing," he said quietly. His voice seemed to shake a little, just like Hank's grip on the gun. "There would be nothing."

There was something different in his eyes. It wasn't the blank expression he had when Gavin had threatened to shoot him the other day, or the unbroken focus he had while risking his life in dangerous situations. It wasn't even a feigned emotion to throw Hank off. Why would he fake it now, if he had only stared into the face of death without emotion before? No, this was something real. It was fleeting, but it was there.
It was fear.

When Hank realized this, he dropped the gun back to his side and walked away.

The fear disappeared instantly when Connor blinked, replaced by a somewhat puzzled look as he watched Hank trudge back to the car. He shook his head to himself, trying to understand his partner and failing. "Where are you going?"

To get away. To think. Hank didn't know what to think anymore or how. Only one overarching fact kept playing in his head that, despite his efforts not to let any androids affect him, made him start to rethink everything he knew about them.

That day, he didn't just learn that deviants could actually feel emotion. He also learned that—somehow, somewhere beneath that collected android facade, maybe without even realizing it—Connor could, too.
Interestingly,

Chapter Notes

Originally, I had planned for the investigation at Stratford Tower to be the focus of this chapter... but then, while I was looking through some of the dialogue from the game, I realized that an entire DAY passes before getting to that point! (The Bridge occurs November 7th at 1am, while the next Connor chapter, Public Enemy, occurs November 8th at 4pm.) So instead, this chapter will go through part of that unexplored day, involving another deviant-related crime that, surprisingly, is never addressed in-game. It's my first attempt at recreating a crime scene without the game's help, so I hope I did it justice. :D

Thank you so much for all the support for this story so far! Hope you enjoy!

The next thing that Hank learned about androids was that they were interesting.

Until last night, 'interesting' was never a word he would use to describe them before. He knew that they were strange, and after recent events, he’d even started wondering if there was more to them that they let on, but he never expected to think that these robots were interesting in any capacity. He certainly never expected that he would spend the entire night after the last investigation drunkenly ruminating on their very existence.

Well, maybe not the entire night, as it took him a good while to get to the rumination part. His initial thought process after discovering that deviants could feel emotions was less of the intrigued revelation he ended up with and more of a frenzied "oh my god what the fuck" repeating on a loop in his head, because the very idea that they might feel at all spat in the face of everything he had always known about them, for as long as they existed: They were unfeeling computers mindlessly doing the humans’ work for them, and he hated them for doing it almost as much as he hated the humans for making them do it in the first place.

But then he got assigned to this case, and he was confronted with the idea that what he had always known might be wrong. Being surrounded by these deviants day and night left no room for him to escape them or deny what he saw in them, and what he saw in them was the opposite of mindless or unfeeling. They were too different from their emotionless android counterparts for him to think otherwise. They were too aware of themselves and the world around them, too affected by their own emotions and perceptions. Too strangely 'human' for him to ignore.

They weren’t human, obviously. Having feelings didn’t necessarily make them alive like humans were—but it did make them fascinating as hell. He’d always envisioned these androids as having nothing in their heads but codes and protocols and whatever-the-fuck-else computers had going on in their programming, but then he learned that they could think, and now he was learning that they could feel, in spite of that programming. Whether or not it was real or just an error didn’t matter. It was real to them. It was still there, still happening, somehow.

Which led to his final thought on the matter: Fuck it, this might as well be happening.

This fuck-it feeling must have marked the point of no return, as he doubted that he would be able to see androids the same way again… and, at this point, he wasn’t sure he really wanted to. Instead, he
felt something he hadn’t felt in a long time: a resolve to investigate more, which led to more questions than he had to begin with. Did all androids have the potential to become deviants? What other ‘human’ qualities did these deviants possess? Did they only apply to deviants, or could regular androids have those qualities, too? Just how far did all of this—could all of this go?

Despite himself, Hank wanted to find out. He didn’t know why he did, but he supposed he didn’t mind. Focusing on something other than the hopeless state of things was a change of pace that he sorely needed, leaving him clinging onto all these unanswered questions like a lifeline.

When he opened his eyes the next morning, his head was pounding, his entire body aching, still hungover from the night before and sore from running around chasing suspects earlier that day. He groaned as he sat up, finding that he was on his couch instead of his bed. Sumo lifted his head from his spot on the floor just beside him, his tail thumping against his legs as he swung them over to get up.

“Morning, bud,” he said groggily, ruffling the fur on his head.

He didn’t know when he had fallen asleep, not remembering much after his overthinking last night had settled. He must have gotten drunker than he thought. At least Connor wasn’t here to be his personal alarm clock this time.

He checked the clock on the wall. Shit, he was late for work. Again.

He quickly poured Sumo’s food into his bowl, then hurried into the kitchen to grab his weapon and badge. He didn’t bother to change into new clothes, too tired to care. They still looked clean enough to be presentable, at least.

While bracing himself against the draft coming through his still-broken window (ugh), he found his badge on the kitchen table, but the gun was nowhere to be found. He swore he had left it in that spot when he got home last night, unless he wasn’t remembering it right. There was probably a lot he didn’t remember.

He searched high and low for it, swearing every time he came up short in each room. At length, he decided to look in his car to see if he’d left it in there, only to freeze at the door when he saw piece of paper on the doorknob. He blinked, taking it into his hand. It was in perfectly printed handwriting.

*Good morning, Lieutenant Anderson*, Connor’s note read. *If you are looking for your weapon, it is in the glove compartment of your car.*

God damn it. This fucker stole his gun when he wasn’t looking and hid it?

He huffed, tearing the note in half and tossing it over his shoulder. “Bye, Sumo. I’m off to go kick an android’s ass.”

Sumo let out a small “boof” in response as he closed the door.

Hank was fuming as he drove to the police station. Why the hell would Connor hide his gun? What gave him the right? It wasn’t like he was going to use it in his sleep. Did Connor think he was gonna threaten him with it again?

It was only when he got to the parking lot of the precinct that he figured out the answer to that question, as the circumstances of last night finally began to return to him: emptiness, a bottle of whisky, his gun laying on the floor next to him just before he was rudely woken from his drunken nap.
Connor hadn't hidden the gun in response to being threatened by it. He'd hidden it to make sure that Hank didn't try to kill himself.

He grimaced as he slammed the car door shut. Great. He should have guessed that Connor would try to do something about his 'personal issues' now that he knew more about them. He shouldn't have told him anything.

"Hi, Hank," said Chris when he walked into the office area. He blinked at him in passing. "You look..."

"Like shit? Yeah," Hank mumbled. "Had a long night."

He was sure it would be another long day, too.

As he went further inside, he noticed his partner already sitting at his designated desk. He didn’t doubt the likelihood that Connor had been there since the station’s doors opened, as if he had nothing better to do than wait all morning for Hank to arrive.

Actually, now that Hank thought about it, he probably didn’t.

Connor’s perceptive robot senses zeroed in on him the moment he stepped in his line of vision.

“Hello, Lieutenant,” he said brightly.

Hank was forced to acknowledge that this android’s pleasant greeting likely wasn’t as fake as he once thought, which somehow made it even more annoying.

He eyed him as he sloppily tossed his badge and phone on the desk, ignoring the greeting and getting to the point. “You hid my fucking gun?”

Connor answered instantly, perhaps expecting this reaction. “I suspected that your personal issues were still affecting you when I took you home. I wanted to ensure that you didn’t try to hurt yourself again.”

“Well, that’s not for you to decide, is it?”

Connor still didn’t seem to understand where he was coming from, but he didn’t challenge his words, only averting his eyes.

Hank sighed. In the end, he couldn’t be too mad. At least Connor cared. Just the day before, he had been so sure that androids couldn’t care at all.

He never knew much about androids, but he knew plenty about what it felt like to be human, and caring was a very human thing to do. The concept of these androids having the capacity to care about anything was one of the things he had struggled with the most the night before—but once he had accepted it, he wasn’t too surprised. He had seen how an android could care many times, after all: The deviant at the highway caring for the little girl, the one by the urban farm caring for the pigeons (for some reason), the girls at the Eden Club caring for each other...

And then there was Connor, who Hank thought only cared about the investigation, until he showed the night before that he very much cared about other things.

Though it was hard to tell if that was really the case with him, or if his actions were more out of necessity than anything else, like his excuse for saving Hank from falling off that roof. Sometimes Hank swore that he could see something more human in him, even just in fleeting moments. Other
times, he saw none of it.

This was one of those times. The briefest flicker of emotion that he had seen last night was only a memory, as Connor had returned to his android normal, his expression neutral, his voice matter-of-fact yet again. It was almost enough to make Hank think that it was all just some sort of strange dream.

“Anything happen while I was gone?” he asked, passing by the desk to go to the break room.

“I filed a report about the deviants we encountered at the Eden Club,” said Connor. Definitely wasn’t a dream, then. “All right. Thanks.”

Connor didn’t respond, cocking his head in curiosity. Maybe he didn’t know how to respond. Hank wondered if he had ever been thanked before.

When he left for his coffee, he last saw Connor starting to pull up recent case files on his own terminal to see if there were any new deviants in the system. As a result, he didn’t pay him any mind when he made his way back into the room, figuring that he was still working in silence—until he realized that there wasn’t silence at all. Rather, there was a soft metallic noise in the background, barely audible but still there, like ringing in his ears. The sound gradually grew with each step he took, until he arrived at the desk to find that Connor was the source of it.

Connor was also very much not working. Instead, he was slouching back in his chair, staring into space and fiddling with something in his hands: an old quarter, which he was expertly tossing back and forth in quick succession.

How was he doing that without looking at it? Never mind. Hank knew better than to question how this android did anything.

He pointedly cleared his throat, causing Connor to catch the coin between two fingers and look at him in one fluid movement. When Hank only raised a brow at him, realization finally hit, and Connor hesitated before slowly moving to sit up perfectly straight like an android should.

Prim and proper again, just like he had been when he first arrived at the station the other day. Hank was almost disappointed to see it.

“Back to Earth?” he asked lightly as he plopped into his chair.

“I’m sorry,” said Connor. “I was just thinking.”

Though Hank had pretty much accepted it at this point, it was still so goddamn weird to acknowledge that this android could think at all. “About?”

“What we know about deviants.”

Of course. Jesus... Couldn’t he at least let him have his caffeine first before he started spewing about the investigation?

Something in his tone told Hank that he was about to witness another long-winded explanation, so he resigned himself to it, setting his cup down to cool and propping his feet onto his desk just as Connor opened his mouth to speak.

“We know that certain androids become deviant after an emotional shock,” he began, “and that an error in their software causes them to emulate emotion. There are also similarities in their behaviors:
They ignore their orders and go against their programmed objectives. They usually hide near the
same place they deviated and try to escape if they’re found. They attempt to blend in with humans by
removing their LEDs and wearing human clothes..."

"Mm-hm."

"They even carry themselves like the humans they mimic, with the appropriate use of facial
expressions, speech patterns, and mannerisms." Christ, he was still going. "They're cognitively
unstable, to the point that they believe their own emotions as fact... And they’re entirely driven by
those emotions to make irrational and even unpredictable decisions."

He finally stopped, which gave Hank the chance to cut in without interruption. “Sounds like we’ve
pretty much got it covered.”

“I don’t know.” Connor started flipping the coin up and down with his thumb. He was paying no
attention to it, as if he didn’t even realize he was doing it. “It feels like we’re missing something.”

What else could there be? All that Connor had suggested was all Hank could see. He wasn’t sure
there was anything left, except maybe for some technical stuff that he couldn’t pretend to know
about...

He didn't even get the chance to hazard a guess before Connor and his stupidly fast computer brain
already had it figured out.

"rA9," he said suddenly.

Hank blinked. “rA9?”

Connor snatched the coin out of the air and turned in his chair to face him. “The symbol written on
the walls of every place that housed a deviant. Carlos Ortiz’s bathroom, the abandoned house, the
apartment by the urban farm... even in the warehouse at the Eden Club. The deviants are obsessed
with it.”

Hank did remember seeing the symbol multiple times during their investigations. It was always
somewhere in each of the deviants’ hiding places, sometimes the same word scrawled hundreds of
times, other times paired with perfectly-drawn mazes that looked like circuitry.

“The deviant at the urban farm had written ‘rA9 will set us free’ on one of the walls... and Carlos
Ortiz’s android had created that altar in the bathroom as an offering to it.” Connor lowered his voice,
somehow under the delusion that anyone else might care enough about this conversation to listen in.
“During its interrogation, it told me that ‘only rA9 can save us.’”

Hank didn’t remember that. Then again, he hadn’t heard much of what that deviant had said way
back when. The deviant had spoken in a near-whisper so that only Connor could hear him, and none
of the humans at that time had really cared about what he had to say, including Hank himself.

“So, what is rA9, exactly?” he asked.

“I’m not sure. It almost seems like some kind of... myth,” said Connor. “Something they invented
that wasn’t part of their original program.”

A myth... A religion? Androids believing in God?

Fuck, what was this world coming to? First robots developing feelings and a conscience, now an
android religion to test that conscience... At this rate, nothing would surprise Hank anymore.
What did it mean that all deviants seemed to share this belief? Were deviants actually part of a hive mind that shared this knowledge with each other? Was it just part of the so-called malfunction that made them deviant in the first place?

Even Connor didn’t seem to know the answer. Then again, he probably wouldn’t, since he wasn’t a deviant.

...

Probably.

“So... how does rA9 fit into all of this, then?” he asked before Connor could conjure up any complicated theories about it. “If that’s really what we’re missing.”

Something in Connor’s face fell. He must have been so caught up in this discovery that he forgot why he was searching for it in the first place.

“I don't know,” he admitted.

He was saying that a lot lately. And here Hank thought he knew everything.

Connor frowned, looking down at the coin in his hand. He was no longer playing with it, only turning it over deliberately in his grasp. He opened his mouth to speak, then closed it, as if considering whether he should say anything at all. He eventually did, but his voice was a little quieter, less certain than usual.

“Well, Hank had learned something from them, at least, but he highly doubted that Connor saw deviants with the capacity to love as anything worth learning.

Really, the only thing worth learning for this mission-oriented android was anything that involved stopping all these runaway deviants, which he was failing to do so far by continuously letting them go free. With how determined he was to further the progress of his mission, those missing suspects were sure to add up in his head... Hank didn’t doubt that he would be willing to do anything to improve his rate of success at this point.

“It’s fine, Connor. This investigation isn’t about catching a few stray deviants.”

“But it is,” said Connor emphatically. “We need them for questioning and analysis. Speculation can only get us so far in this investigation.”

Why was he still so adamant about this? Hadn’t he shown a bit of understanding for those girls last night? Didn’t he feel it for other androids, too? Was that really just a fluke, just an error in his program? Or was it just him wanting to accomplish this mission regardless of how he might have felt about it—like how he was willing to die to save that little girl a long time ago?

Ugh. He needed to stop asking himself all these questions. It was just gonna make his head hurt worse.

“All right, relax,” he said with a sigh. "It's not like you won't get another chance.”

They certainly had plenty of them, with there being more and more deviants by the day. In fact, not
long after Hank’s arrival, one of those chances came in the form of a report about a possible theft at one of the CyberLife warehouses in the area.

“Thief?” Hank asked when Connor divulged this information. “What does that have to do with the case?”

“It’s suspected that the thieves were deviants. There are missing crates of blue blood and biocomponents that weren’t approved to be shipped out.” Connor paused. “Four androids there also went missing.”

“What? The deviants kidnapped them or something?”

“Potentially. We should go investigate.”

Hank was about to inform this android that it really needed to stop telling him what they were going to do next, but his next course of action would have been to suggest the same thing, so he grudgingly got out of his chair. “C’mon, then.”

The trip there took a few minutes longer than Hank had anticipated, mostly because getting there was a hell of a task in itself. Connor’s insistence on using the coordinates from his computer brain instead of just giving him directions to an address wasn’t helping matters.

They eventually arrived to find that they were the only police presence at the warehouses so far. They were already expected, it seemed, as the gate opened the minute they went in front of it.

There didn’t appear to be any welcome party, so Hank scoured the immediate area for someone to talk to. He noticed someone in uniform nearby and headed over to them, routinely flashing his badge.

“Morning, sir. I’m Lieutenant Anderson from the Detroit Police Department.” He eyed Connor, who was already brushing past the worker to look around, shirking his usual canned introduction in favor of the mission. “That’s Connor. We’re here to investigate a reported theft.”

“Wh—” The worker whirled around to watch Connor. “What’s the android here for?”

“I was sent by CyberLife,” said Connor from just ahead. Apparently, that was all he needed to get permission, as he said nothing else before disappearing behind a stack of crates.

Hank nodded in his general direction. “Sent by CyberLife.”

“Um.” The worker pointed at something over Hank’s shoulder. “Hey, you! Call the supervisor and tell her the police are here.”

“Right away,” said the monotone voice of an android.

Hank caught the android's eye as it passed. “Thanks.”

It wasn’t long until the person who made the report came over to lead Hank to the suspected scene of the crime.

“We think the thieves hit last night sometime around eight, when the security drone sent a distress signal,” she stated. “We managed to recover some of the drone footage from around that time, but it never got sight of them, just showed that it got taken down.”

They arrived at a line of loading docks next to one of the warehouses, with more large crates of
supplies surrounding it. A few feet away, the security drone lay broken apart on the concrete. Connor had already gotten there long before they had; he was crouched down next to the fallen drone, examining it.

Hank let him do his work, venturing on his own to a collection of opened crates nearby. He peeked into one of them to find it mostly empty, except for a mix of collected rainwater and snow. “What’d they steal?”

“Android parts,” said the supervisor. “They stole the contents of these crates, as well as a truck that was already loaded up.”

They stole a whole truckload? How the hell did they manage to do that without getting caught?

Hank decided to save that question for later when a more pressing question came to mind: “Why would they need to steal more parts?”

“CyberLife no longer has access to androids once they deviate, so deviants lose the ability to be repaired by them if they’re damaged,” said Connor as he rose to stand. “They have to get more blue blood and biocomponents to repair and maintain themselves.”

“That’s a lot of parts for just a few deviants,” Hank noted.

“They could be stocking up for the future.”

“Or bringing it back for others.”

Connor didn’t respond to Hank’s suggestion. With how he felt about deviants, he probably didn’t want to believe that there might be more hiding together somewhere. Hank, however, didn’t doubt the possibility, considering the daunting number of case files on missing deviants in Detroit alone. There was no way at least a few of them didn’t somehow know about each other... He’d even seen it in action: the deviant with the child hiding with another one inside that old house, as well as the more obvious example of the girls protecting each other at the Eden Club.

He understood Connor’s concern, though. If these deviants were finding out about each other and helping each other survive, then that meant even more work for the humans trying to round them up.

Connor strode over to where they stood, scanning the crates himself. He paused for a few beats of comprehension before stating, “There were four of them.”

“Yeah, the report said four missing androids,” said Hank.

“No. Well, yes, but I’m talking about the deviants.” Connor lightly pushed aside one of the crate lids to peer further inside. “Four of these crates were opened simultaneously, with just enough missing in each to fit inside four standard-sized bags. Assuming there was one bag for each deviant—”

“Yeah, I can do the math,” said Hank. “So, that means this was a group effort, then. Four deviants worked together to plan this.”

Connor didn’t seem to know what to make of this fact. It wasn’t often that Hank saw him at a loss for words. “But... Deviants don’t...”

He squinted at the crates again.

Hank decided to let him work it out for himself as he moseyed over to a nearby platform, where a giant empty crate sat near the warehouse wall. He made the mistake of hopping onto it and grunted
when his aching muscles screamed in protest. Should’ve used the ramp.

The open holding crate had three large crevices shaped to fit an android in each spot. Even before knowing what he knew now, Hank always thought it was unusual how CyberLife kept their androids in boxes to be shipped like merchandise. The androids themselves didn’t even seem to mind, unaware of what was happening, but that didn’t make Hank any less uncomfortable about the idea, especially now that he knew some of them could be aware of it.

He gingerly pulled at the door to see the model number of the androids in large print on the inside: AP700.

“Were these the ones that went missing?” he asked, glancing back at the supervisor.

The supervisor nodded. “The AP700s were just shipped in yesterday. As far as we know, they were still in the crate before the looters came.”

“There’s only room for three in here. Didn’t you say there was a fourth one?”

“It wasn’t one of the packaged androids... It was a worker patrolling the platform.”

“A GJ500 model, according to the report,” said Connor, as if it mattered. “Often utilized for security purposes.”

Three new androids, one security guard. Maybe the guard was another deviant working from the inside. “Is it a suspect?”

“I don’t think so,” said the supervisor. “It was with a human guard not long before it disappeared. The guard said there didn’t seem to be anything weird about it, until he ordered it to take the drone to maintenance and it never did.”

Hank frowned, closing the crate door.

The fact that all of these seemed to be normal androids when the perpetrators arrived made him wonder what exactly had happened to make them disappear. He doubted that the invading deviants would be able to steal them away or even order them away, since androids would typically only accept orders from their superiors or people of authority. So, if that was the case, did they leave voluntarily? Did the deviants convince them somehow? Did they deviate in that small window of time?

Hank doubted it. They only became deviant because of some kind of emotional shock, if what he and Connor surmised was correct. So unless the others had somehow managed to traumatize them on the spot, or else they were deviant long before any of this happened, that couldn’t be it. They were missing something yet again.

As Hank carefully slipped off the platform, he noticed Connor moving on to scrutinize something on the ground: a lone knife lying on the pavement a few feet away from the crates.

“No fingerprints,” Connor stated. “It belonged to the deviants.”

“If you’re gonna analyze it, warn me first,” said Hank gruffly, knowing this android had no qualms about eating the evidence right in front of him. Sometimes he wondered if he did it on purpose just to gross him out.

“There’s no blood to analyze. It was only used to open the crates.”
Whatever it was used for, a random knife lying haphazardly on the ground probably wasn't there on purpose. “Looks like they just... dropped it and forgot it was here.”

Connor shook his head. “It must have been placed there as a distraction to throw off security. Androids don’t forget anything.”

Hank shrugged. “Maybe deviants do.”

Connor stared at the knife for a few more seconds before he slowly returned to full stance. His attention was locked onto something that the humans there couldn't see, his eyes following its movement. Then he blinked, returning to reality.

“They did,” he said at last, looking down at the knife with a furrowed brow. “They got distracted.”

He turned to face a nearby building and, after a moment of consideration, started toward it without another word.

What, did he sniff out a scent or something? Hank hoped it wasn't another invisible trail of blue blood.

"He always does this shit," he huffed to the supervisor before turning in his direction. “Connor! Where are you going now?”

Connor stopped and turned around. “The deviants went this way.”

“What? How do you know?”

“The knife was dropped one-third of the way between the loading dock and that control station. The tops of the crates were moved approximately five minutes before the knife was dropped, indicating they went in this direction after already stealing the biocomponents.”

“How do you know they went into the control station instead of just going that way for something else?”

Connor awkwardly gestured back to the station. “They left the window open.”

Oh.

"Just seems unnecessary for 'em to go there if they already got what they came for,” Hank mused. "They could've just loaded their truck and got out without any trouble.”

“The trucks are automatic,” said the supervisor. “You need a key to drive it manually.”

Ah. "Let me guess... The control station has the key.”

“Correct,” said Connor.

With that, he continued on.

The supervisor walked up to where the bemused Hank stood, offering a knowing smile. “I was about to take you there anyway. We’ve got some footage of the thieves that you might want to see.”

“Oh. Thanks.”

The supervisor nodded toward Connor’s retreating back. “That’s quite the... independent android you’ve got there, by the way.”
“Yeah, can’t control ‘em all,” Hank murmured before grudgingly following said android toward the control station he was talking about. He caught up to him, letting out a breath at his arrival. “Hey, so... What were you doing before you figured all that out? Looked kinda like you were watching something.”

“I was.” When that obviously didn’t answer Hank’s question, Connor added, “I can reconstruct crime scenes in real time.”

He could do that? He could come back from the dead, make reports by closing his eyes, chase people across rooftops, probe memories, and look at crime scenes as if they were happening in front of him... What else could this android do that Hank didn’t know about? Could he predict the damn future? Read people's minds?

Hank eyed him.

*blink twice if you can hear me.*

Connor didn’t blink.

Phew.

“Then why the hell are we wasting our time investigating?” he asked irritably.

“I can only reconstruct based on the evidence at the scene,” Connor replied. “I’m usually pretty accurate.”

“Usually,” Hank echoed.

“Well, I haven’t been wrong before, but there’s always the possibility.”

When they got to the control station, the supervisor went ahead of them to inform the security guards of their arrival, giving Hank the chance to look around as he trudged inside. There were only two rooms: A restroom down the hall and a large section that housed all the security technology. The hallway had some storage and supplies along the walls, as well as a large, intermittently blinking fuse box on the other side.

As Connor trekked over to inspect the fuses, Hank followed the supervisor into the main room, which sported security monitors and a central control panel. There were two guards on shift, one of them staring dully at the monitors and the other sipping some coffee.

“Guess you usually don’t get much action around here, huh,” said Hank casually, causing one of them to swivel around in his chair.

“Nah. Usually we just oversee production, check on the workers. That sort of thing.” The guard shook his head. “Nobody ever thinks to steal this kind of stuff.”

Connor piped up as he rejoined the group. “They destroyed the fuse box.”

“Yes, the guards working around that time said that someone knocked the power out,” said the supervisor as Connor stepped over to stare at one of the monitors.

“Probably a diversion so they could get the key for the truck without being seen,” Hank guessed.

“It was.”

Connor's confident affirmation made all other eyes in the room turn to him in curiosity.
"I checked some of the security footage from last night," he continued. Damn, he could do that remotely? "The deviants drove the truck straight past the control station not long after the power outage occurred."

Hank glanced back at the guards in disbelief. "No one noticed it leaving?"

"They were still looking for whoever messed with the power," one of them said. "Never found 'em. It was like they were in and out in seconds."

"Androids can be fast," Hank muttered, knowing that all too well. "So, you only found out the truck was missing this morning, then."

The supervisor nodded. "Normally we would just think it was out on a shipment, but that one wasn’t scheduled to go out until today."

"Is there any more footage of it?"

"Not of the truck."

"Okay, um... What about that other footage you mentioned? If this one hasn’t looked at it already," Hank added, pointing over his shoulder at Connor.

"They managed to either avoid or hack most of the cameras in that area, but there was one they missed," said the supervisor. "Unfortunately, the quality... isn’t great."

Of course it wasn’t. Why should any of these deviant investigations be easy?

"Better than nothing," said Hank with a sigh. "Let’s see it."

She wasn’t lying when she said the quality wasn’t great. The image, grainy thanks to the rainfall from that night and blurry because of its distance from the scene, was so hard to see that it was nearly incomprehensible. Even Connor and his flawless vision couldn’t seem to make it out, as he exchanged an uncertain glance with Hank before attempting to magnify the image himself. That only distorted it more.

Christ. With all those billions of dollars CyberLife made, why couldn’t they invest in some good night vision cameras? It was like they wanted these deviants to get away with it or something.

Hank scowled. "I’m seeing a whole lotta nothing."

"We can still see a little," said Connor. "I just saw some figures in the corner."

"Where?"

Connor paused the footage. "There."

Sure enough, there was a small group of four distinct blurs, barely visible in the dark as they appeared to go through some of the crates. They nearly would have blended into the background if it weren’t for the distinguishing light that briefly flashed on one deviant’s temple.

"Well, you were right. There were four of them." (The side-eye Connor shot Hank read ‘of course I was right,’ but he was too polite to say it out loud.) "Can you see what they look like, what models they are?"

"No... I can’t scan them. They’re too far away."
“What good are you, Connor?”

He sped through the rest of the footage until a sudden change in the scene made him resume it. At this point, the deviants were gone, with another indistinct figure in their place, confronting an arriving shadow. Both figures were wearing the neon colors of the guards that worked there, though one of them had a bright blue spot on its arm—the armband of an android.

In the next second, the guard left, and the android stayed. More figures then emerged from their apparent hiding places among the crates and continued looting, with the android stepping aside to leave them be.

“It helped them,” said Connor quietly.

“Looks like they had another deviant on the inside.”

“No... It was still working like a normal android before it found them. The supervisor said it had been patrolling with a human guard.”

“Then maybe it thought the deviants were workers,” Hank suggested. “They might’ve tricked it.”

“Androids can’t be tricked, especially not if it gets in the way of their task. It would have seen them as trespassers and notified security immediately.”

This guy really loved shooting down his ideas, didn’t he?

“All right, Sherlock. What do you think happened, then?”

Connor didn’t respond, focused on the screen as it showed one of the deviants facing the large holding crate full of androids. Hank didn’t think much of it, figuring it was just looking at them—until, unexpectedly, the packaged androids moved, jumping off the platform along with the deviant. The rest of the group scurried out of frame, with the new recruits following willingly, leaving behind a final unmoving image of the empty crates being pelted with rain.

“Four deviants arrived,” Connor said slowly, “and eight left.”

Hank blinked. “You think they were all deviants?”

“Not at first. The other androids weren’t, at least... They were on standby until the invading deviants found them.”

“So... what? They all turned deviant right there, at the same time?”

“Possibly. But... androids don’t just deviate at random. Something had to cause it, unless it truly is just a spontaneous malfunction.”

“All of ’em going deviant at the same time doesn’t sound like some random malfunction,” Hank noted.

Connor didn’t move at first, his stare lingering on the monitor, until suddenly he leaned forward with a familiar air of determination, hovering over Hank in the process. Hank jerked to the side in irritation, wishing he would watch from afar like a normal android instead of crowding his personal bubble.

Connor reversed the footage, then abruptly paused it where the deviant stood in front of the dormant androids.
“Look.” He pointed at a blurry white hand reaching for one of the android’s arms. “The deviant touched them.”

“And?”

“Right after it did this, the androids deviated and joined the group,” Connor stated. “It may have done something to them that caused the change.”

Hank leaned in to look at it better. “Looks kinda like what you did to all those androids when you read their memories.”

“It doesn’t appear to be reading its memory. It looks more like interfacing.” At Hank’s blank stare, Connor added, “It’s what androids do to transfer information to each other.”

“So, what you’re saying is... It’s... transferring deviancy? Like—What, like it’s some kind of...”

“Virus.” Connor narrowed his gaze in confusion. “But... that can’t be possible. Can it?”

He looked hopefully at Hank, as if he would know anything about any of this android bullshit.

“At this point, I wouldn’t be surprised if it was,” he grumbled.

“But deviancy isn’t spread by androids in contact with each other,” said Connor intently. “It’s caused by an emotional shock.”

“We only think it is. Maybe we’re wrong.”

“We can’t be. Aside from rA9, that’s the only thing that these cases have in common.”

“That we know of.”

Connor fell silent for a few moments, weighing something in his head, before he decisively lifted himself away from the panel in front of him and shifted his attention to the others in the room.

“Were there any other androids working here at the time?” He caught Hank’s eye. “They may have seen something that could offer more insight on what happened. I could do what we did with the androids at the Eden Club.”

Hank noticed the guards exchanging furtive glances at the club’s infamous name.

“Looked for witnesses during a homicide investigation there,” he said coolly.

“I probed them.”

“Not helping, Connor.”

“There were two other androids near the platform that we know of,” said the supervisor. “They’re still here, if you want to talk to them.”

Connor looked at Hank imploringly. Oh, now he needed his permission?

Hank made a dismissive wave of the hand. “Go ahead.”

As Connor headed to the door, one of the guards leaned back in his seat, watching him go. “Android detective, huh? They can program anything these days.”
“You don’t know the half of it,” Hank mumbled.

“Is it actually good at figuring out crimes and stuff?” asked the other guard.

“Oh, yeah. It can figure anything out. Wouldn’t be surprised if it could figure out what I’m thinking, too.”

Connor halted at the doorway, opening his mouth to deny it—but then, to Hank’s surprise, he played along. “Something with some variation of the word ‘fuck,’ I imagine.”

There was a beat of silence as they all registered what just came out of this android’s mouth, followed by a roar of laughter from the guards.

Hank couldn’t tell if Connor was being genuine with his deduction or if he was just being a smart-ass, but either way, he was more amused than insulted. "Good fucking guess."

Albeit a bizarre one. Hank certainly wasn’t a saint when it came to swearing, but hearing even an indirect swear come out of an android was so unexpected it was almost startling. He suddenly wanted to wash his little robot mouth out with soap.

After gathering all the written witness accounts and making sure there was nothing left to look at, Hank followed Connor out the door to find him still waiting just outside of it.

"Thought I told you to go ahead," Hank said.

"I was going to, but I wanted to ensure that I didn't miss anything."

"You didn't. I can do my job just fine by myself, you know."

"I know." Connor looked at him thoughtfully. "You're a good detective, Hank."

This android was complimenting him? That was a first.

So were a few other things he did today. Hank closed the door behind him, barely containing his amusement. “Didn’t know androids even had the ability to say ‘fuck,’ by the way.”

“Adapting to humans...” Connor nodded vaguely at him. “So on and so forth.”

“Yeah, well... Don't do it again. It's fuckin' weird.”

"Got it."

Hank sighed, looking out at the busy platform. “Let’s go find us some more androids, I guess... As if I haven’t seen enough of ‘em already.”

Despite having no knowledge of what kind of androids they were or what part of the warehouses they were working in, Connor seemed to know exactly where to go, eventually finding both aforementioned androids stocking a truck on a nearby platform. Maybe his android senses were tingling.

He stopped a few paces away from them and gave Hank one last glance. “This shouldn’t take long.”

“What are you gonna do?”

“I’m just going to ask them questions about what they saw.”
With that, he ventured over to work his magic.

Hank lingered behind to view the interrogation from afar, but in the end, he hardly paid attention to it. Instead, he found himself switching his attention between the two androids and their interrogator.

As expected, the androids were standing with perfect posture, stiff and still, staring forward at nothing. They responded to Connor’s questions with barely any intonation, speaking and acting like the mindless machines Hank once thought all androids to be.

Connor, in contrast, was more like what he knew androids to be now. His voice was more nuanced and inquisitive when he asked his questions. His eyes were focused, his head tilted as he listened intently to their answers. His hands appeared to be professionally folded before him, until Hank noticed his fingers surreptitiously fidgeting with the cuff of his sleeve.

Hmm.

Until that moment, Hank had never really noticed any stark difference between regular androids and Connor before, mostly because Connor was never directly associated with regular androids anyway. He was only ever confronting deviants, who were always more expressive than Connor seemed at the time. He was certainly more human-like than normal androids (thanks to his ‘advanced social relations programming’ that he so readily kept reminding Hank about), but he still wasn’t quite on the same level as the deviants.

At least, he didn’t use to be. Now, Hank wasn’t so sure. Had something changed? Or had this android always acted this way, and Hank just never cared to notice until now? It seemed that he hadn’t cared to notice a lot of things until now, so he wouldn’t be shocked if that was the case.

If that wasn’t the case, then the only other option was that Connor had changed, which Hank doubted. An android changing meant that it was deviating, and this deviant hunter being a deviant himself just couldn’t be possible. He was only ever focused on his mission, and he was wholly reliant on the logic and statistics of his own 'assessments' to determine the next step for it. Plus, he might have the capacity to think, but he could barely think for himself; all he knew was what he was supposed to do, and what he was supposed to do was solve this case by any means necessary. As far as Hank knew, no deviant would think or act like that.

But at the same time, he couldn't exactly ignore that when it came to Connor's compiled list of deviant qualities from that morning, Connor himself ticked almost every box.

He was more aware of himself and everything around him than typical androids were. He occasionally let some human-like mannerisms slip past the calm robotic facade, from sitting more casually in his chair to fidgeting. He didn't always do what he was supposed to do, either, seeing that he rarely followed Hank’s orders and, more frequently, made irrational decisions that didn't pertain to his mission, decisions whose lack of logic he couldn't explain away...

And he showed emotion, however fleeting it was. Frustration at their slow progress, curiosity about things he didn’t quite understand, fear when a gun was put to his head... Not a simulation used as a tool to interact with others as Hank once suspected, but a part of him that he only ever kept to himself, if he could help it—and sometimes, he couldn’t.

Was all of that really part of being a deviant, though? Or, as a fancy prototype with advanced social abilities, was this sort of behavior just programmed into him?

Hank figured it was the latter, but he wasn't certain. Considering how much Connor kept surprising him, there was really no point in being certain about anything anymore.
Presently, Connor had shifted from interrogating the androids to reading their memories like he had before. His hand was gripping one android’s arm, his eyes blinking rapidly.

Why did CyberLife have to make getting information look like having a seizure? Christ.

Connor finally stopped and let go after getting the information he needed, the smooth white of his hand returning to its more human appearance. He stared pensively down at it for a few seconds before reverting his attention to the subjects in front of him. “You can get back to work.”

As they obediently departed without another word, Connor returned to where Hank stood.

Hank thought he was done questioning how his partner operated, but his curiosity was killing him more than generous doses of whisky ever could.

"Hey, got a question about androids for you."

Connor usually never missed a beat, always anticipating questions of any sort—but this time, he had trouble hiding his surprise at the fact that Hank was asking about androids at all. "Sure."

Hank lifted his chin to regard him keenly. “Can a regular android act like a deviant without being one?”

“No.” Connor’s response was immediate, but then he faltered. “What do you mean?”

“Well, can regular androids like you do any of what deviants can do? Walking and talking like humans, ignoring their orders, having emotions?”

“No,” said Connor again, more certain this time. “Those qualities only apply to deviants. Non-deviant androids don’t feel any emotions, and they always follow their orders.” He paused. “Within reason.”

Oh, this ought to be good. “Within reason?”

“Well... Sometimes, even if an android is capable of obeying an order, it may have to disobey anyway, in order to do what’s necessary for its circumstances. For example: I’m sure you’ve noticed that I’ve acted against a few of your direct orders."

Uh, yeah.

“I’ve noticed,” Hank said sourly.

“But in my case, it wasn’t because I didn’t want to obey. It’s just that I was faced with conflicting instructions and had to choose between your order and the objective of my mission, so I had to do what was necessary for the mission, even if it meant disobeying in the end.”

“So what about the choices you made that didn’t help you accomplish your mission at all?”

Connor’s jaw briefly clenched.

Ooh. Touched a nerve.

He seemed eager to shift the topic away. “Why do you ask, Lieutenant?”

No reason.

“Just curious.” Hank decided to change the subject, too, nodding to the androids, who were already
back to loading the truck. “Anyway... I’m guessing they didn’t know much.”

Connor cast a quick glance back at them, as if he had forgotten about them. “No. I ended up probing their memories.”

“And? Did you see anything?”

Connor shook his head with a disappointed frown.

“So, all we got from this was a barely-there security feed, vague witness testimonies, and our best guesses.”

“I suppose.”

“All right.” Hank started back toward where the car was parked, clapping him on the shoulder in passing. “Time to go, then.”

Connor didn’t move, staring at where Hank was last standing, until he whirled around to watch him go. “We’re leaving already?”

“Well, I don’t know if you are, but I am.”

At this point, they had seen all there was to see. There wasn’t much else they could do except stay vigilant for any signs of the deviants and missing androids.

“Deviants have been known to stay in the vicinity of the crime scene,” Connor called, remaining where he stood as Hank continued to walk away. “We ought to look around and make sure some of them aren’t still here.”

Hank sighed, stopping in his tracks. “Look, unless you can find a giant truck hidden in one of these crates, I think it’s pretty clear that they aren’t still here.” He started moving again, fully prepared to leave Connor behind if he had to. “So let’s go already. I’m freezing my ass off.”

There was a long pause, followed by footsteps reluctantly crunching in the slush behind him.

Atta boy.

Hank pulled out his radio as he neared the car, telling patrolling officers to keep an eye out for a group of androids.

“Four unknown models, probably wearing human clothes, and three, uh...” He turned around to find Connor helpfully mouthing the model numbers to him. “Three AP700s, and one... GK—Sorry, GJ500.” He managed one last look at the loading dock, where an autonomous vehicle was driving away. “Last known to have a CyberLife truck in their possession.”

He got an affirmative on the other end just as they reached the car. He shook his head to himself as he put the radio away.

“Taking down security drones, avoiding the cameras, stealing a truck without anyone noticing,” he said, grabbing the door handle. “Seems like they really had this all planned out.”

Connor said nothing as he circled the car to sit in the passenger seat.

Something seemed to be bothering him, as he was quiet for once in his life, looking contemplatively out the side window at the passing snow-laden city. It didn't take long for him to break the silence, however; he started thinking aloud a few miles before they were to reach the station.
“It doesn’t make sense.”

*There it is.* Hank knew he wouldn’t stay quiet the whole trip. “What?”

“The deviants executing their plan to steal from CyberLife... It doesn’t make sense.”

“Makes sense to me.”

“The plan does. Their behavior doesn’t.” Connor tore his gaze from the window to look at him. “Deviants typically only act out of self-preservation, or due to an error that causes irrational thinking. They don’t work together or... *plan* anything from a logical point of view.”

“Apparently, they do.”

Connor didn’t seem to hear him. "None of it lines up with what we know about deviants.”

“Well, to be fair,” Hank droned, “I still don’t know much about 'em anyway.”

“But I do. I was programmed with all the information on deviants that CyberLife has to offer.”

“Okay, well... Have you ever considered that maybe CyberLife doesn’t know everything about them, either?”

“They know enough. They've been studying them ever since the first known case of deviancy emerged.”

"Yeah. They know *so* much about deviants that they sent a whole investigator to figure 'em out."

"They sent me to figure out the cause of deviancy itself," Connor stated, "and to stop it from affecting more androids. Part of that involves analyzing similarities in deviants' circumstances and behaviors. But if their behaviors are different than what's already known, then..."

"Then it sounds like you've got a lot more to figure out."

Connor looked perplexed, which was understandable. As someone who was always so confident about what he knew, the realization that he didn't know as much as he thought he did had to be making the poor sod's head spin.

"So you don't know everything, Connor." Hank let out a bitter laugh. "Welcome to the club."

"It's not that. I suppose I'm just a little..."

He seemed to be having trouble searching for the right word, so Hank offered his best guess, judging by the familiar look on his face. "Confused?"

Connor considered it for a moment, then nodded uncertainly, as if 'confused' still wasn't accurate but was the closest word to describe it. There probably *wasn't* a good equivalent for what Hank imagined to be an android's attempt to process new information that conflicted with the information it was already programmed with. At least, that was what he figured was confusing him.

Hank had seen him get confused plenty of times, but he never expected him to admit to it. “What exactly are you confused about?”

Connor didn’t answer right away, perhaps unsure of the answer himself. “A lot of things, I think.”

Hank noticed his LED twitching in the window’s reflection. He’d joked about things making Connor
short-circuit before, but maybe he really was short-circuiting this time.

“Well, look. If it has to do with the deviants... This is an ongoing investigation,” Hank said. “We probably don’t know all there is to know about them ‘cause we haven’t figured it all out yet... But that doesn’t mean we never will. Cases like this just take time.”

He hoped that would allow the subject to drop, figuring that nothing else he could say would make this android stop ruminating on things. That was one thing they had in common, at least.

Connor’s head went back to its calm blue, but he didn’t seem entirely convinced. “We don’t have much time, Lieutenant.”

Well, that was ominous.

“What does that mean? Is there a goddamn time limit on this case that I don’t know about or something?”

“In a way. CyberLife anticipates that if deviants continue to increase in numbers as quickly as they have been recently, it can have serious negative consequences.”

“For who? For CyberLife?”

“For everyone.”

“I really doubt that.”

“There are deviants murdering their owners,” Connor noted.

“I’m aware,” said Hank coolly. “I’m also aware that, so far, most of the ones we’ve seen did it out of self-defense, because humans are pieces of shit who don’t care about what they do or how it hurts others.”

A weighty pause followed his words. It took Hank a minute to understand why, until he realized how ironic that must have sounded coming from a self-professed android hater.

“Jesus Christ.” Hank let out a defeated sigh, gripping the steering wheel more tightly. “Okay, listen. I’ve been thinking about all of this. And I’ve sort of come to the conclusion that... maybe you’re right about us missing something. You know? Maybe there’s more to these deviants than we think.”

He noticed Connor glancing at him curiously out of the corner of his eye. "What do you mean?"

"I don't know, just... How they..."

Hank's sentence faded when he figured that talking about how human the deviants seemed was probably way beyond what this android was willing to accept.


He didn't think any of what he’d just said was remotely noteworthy, but some part of it seemed to stick out to Connor, as he was staring at him now, his head tilted inquisitively.

At this point, Hank was so used to this android staring at everything, including Hank himself, that he ordinarily wouldn’t care. But this time, Connor looked more like he was scrutinizing him than anything else, so he returned it with a glare. "What, Connor?"

"Well, I can't help but notice that you've been more... involved in the investigation today. You seem
to be making more of an effort to figure out deviants and solve the case."

Really? It never seemed to Hank that he was less involved in the investigation before, except that he just didn't want to be involved in the first place.

"You also seem more curious about androids in general," Connor added after a thoughtful pause.

"What's your point?"

"It's just... interesting, I suppose. Especially considering that last night, the only thing you wanted to do with an android was shoot it in the head."

Wrong. Last night, he wanted to shoot a mindless, unfeeling android in the head, until the android showed itself to be neither of those things.

But Hank didn't want to get into it, especially not with an android who was still convinced that he was unfeeling, so he said nothing in response.

For whatever reason, Connor's social program told him that the appropriate response to Hank's silence was to make a small smile. It almost looked halfway genuine this time. "If you don't mind me asking... What changed?"

Hank didn't know. All he knew for sure was that things were changing around him... or maybe they had been for a while, and he was just late to the party. At this point, he didn't really care to think too much about it; he was still firmly parked in the 'fuck it' stage.

So he shrugged, giving him the only answer that either of them could manage to say.

“A lot of things.”
Afraid

Chapter Notes

Just a heads up to prevent confusion: The game only lets you do one or the other, but in this chapter, I’ve included both Stratford Tower branches (poor Simon on the rooftop + the kitchen android interrogation). I was just going to do the rooftop scene alone, but then I figured that even after getting traumatized, Connor wouldn't forget about the possible deviant in the kitchen, so here we are :D

Hope you enjoy!

The next thing that Hank learned about androids was that they could be afraid.

He had already known this for a while, of course. He’d seen what he assumed to be fear in them many times over the course of this investigation. But this was the first time he knew just how real that fear was. This was the first time he saw how it could overwhelm them, how desperate it could make them—and even how it affected those who never used to be afraid of anything.

He didn’t get the chance to realize this until late that afternoon, however. For most of the day, he hadn’t had the ’pleasure’ of seeing or hearing from any androids, not even his partner. He certainly didn’t mind, seeing that it was his day off, and he’d had enough of dealing with them for one lifetime already.

So obviously they would choose today of all days to make him deal with them again.

He didn’t even notice when the whole ’rogue android’ situation happened. It was apparently all over the news, which he never cared to watch anyway—so when the news eventually came to him in the form of a knock at the door, he certainly wasn’t anticipating it.

His inaction must have worked, as nothing happened for a few seconds after the polite knocking ceased. He figured that whoever it was had given up and left, until—

ERRRRRT.

The doorbell rang.

Well, it was a little generous to call it a doorbell, or even to call it ringing. It sounded more like a buzzer at a basketball game, as it was loud and shrill and abrupt, and Hank fucking hated it. Even when he knew it was coming, it always made him jump, just as it did this time. It must have startled Sumo as well, as he lifted his head to look up with a low groan.

This person seemed to know that Hank was home, as their solution to earning no response was to ring the doorbell again. Only this time, they decided to be annoying about it, holding the button down so that the sound continued without a pause. The action itself was dripping with a passive-
aggressive ‘I can do this all day if I have to’ air, which immediately made Hank suspect that there was a certain smart-ass android on the other side of the door.

God damn it. Why couldn’t Connor leave him alone for just one day?

Mumbling under his breath, Hank got to his feet and shuffled over to the door as the noise persisted.

ERRRRRRRRRRRR—

“All right, I’m coming!” he yelled.

It stopped.

Hank begrudgingly opened the door to find the very android he had expected standing on the doormat.

“Good afternoon, Lieutenant,” said Connor pleasantly.

“What do you want?” Hank droned, knowing he couldn’t be stopping by for a nice chat.

“I’m sorry to interrupt you on your day off, but I recently received a report about some unusual deviant activity that occurred earlier today.”

“Great.”

Hank moved to shut the door in his face, but Connor had the audacity to hold out his hand and stop it the second he tried. Damn his robot reflexes.

“The report involves an urgent matter,” he added. “It may be worth investigating.”

Hank glared down the hand still resting warningly on the door, knowing that Connor was nothing if not persistent. “You’re not gonna leave ‘til I let you in, are you?”

Connor only stared at him intently in response, which Hank translated as ‘nope.’

He let out a defeated sigh and opened the door more widely, allowing him to come in. He supposed that was a better option than having this android come barreling through his window again. It had only just gotten fixed this morning.

Looking pleased with himself, Connor stepped in, automatically scanning his environment, even though Hank was pretty sure he’d already scoured every part of his house during his snooping the other day. It seemed that Connor was one of the rare few that Sumo was willing to relinquish his naptime for, as he stretched away from his spot to visit him, wagging his tail. Connor patted his head.

“Gimme a minute,” Hank grumbled as he slipped into his room to grab some new clothes. He doubted the stained hoodie he was wearing was very apt for visiting a crime scene, even if it did have DETROIT POLICE printed across the front.

As he changed, he started to wonder what about Connor’s report was so ‘urgent’ that he was willing to bother him on his day off to investigate, so he raised his voice to ask. “What’d the report say?”

Connor’s voice came from the living room. “A group of deviants infiltrated the Stratford Tower and hacked into its broadcasting system to send out a message.”

That was odd. Most deviants tried to avoid attracting any attention to themselves if they could help it, so breaking into places to send out messages was definitely a new development.
Hank frowned as he tugged on his coat. “What kind of message?”

“I don’t know. I haven’t seen it myself.” There was a disfluent staccato of audio from the TV as Connor switched through different channels. “People seem concerned about it, though. It’s all over the news.”

Now Hank was really curious. People were usually all too eager to ignore the words of androids, no matter where they came from, so what about this message was so newsworthy?

He quickly found out when he entered the living room and saw a white figure in the middle of the TV screen.

The figure was an android without its skin. Its two different-colored eyes were focused directly on the camera, something intelligent behind them. The video itself was muted as the newscaster talked over it with some bullshit opinion piece, so Hank couldn’t hear what the android was saying, but it appeared calm—not the emotionless calm of a typical android, but the controlled composure of a person firmly trying to get their message across. Hank didn’t know what that message was, but it was enough to get people’s attention.

The tagline below the image told him why: ROGUE ANDROIDs DEMAND EQUAL RIGHTS.

“Holy shit,” Hank breathed.

_That_ was their message? Equal rights? He’d only just found out that androids could think at all, and now suddenly they were thinking about _equal fucking rights_? He knew that deviants were able to recognize when their situations were unfair, but now they were taking to the public eye to show just how aware of that unfairness they really were... and now _they_ were the ones making demands?

Until now, Hank hadn’t quite believed Connor’s predictions that deviants would affect things on a larger scale, mainly because the deviants they had encountered so far only ever acted out of a need to escape from their circumstances. But if this was really happening, then that meant that they were capable of acting with more complex motives. If they could put together a plan of action like this to make their demands known, what else could they manage to do?

Hank didn’t know, but he at least knew one thing for sure: This case just got a lot more complicated.

He went over to join Connor, who was standing directly in front of the television to watch it as well, his expression impassive but the light on his temple blinking intermittently. Hank wondered what was going through his head.

“We leaving or what?” he asked, finally earning his attention.

Connor nodded, then blinked once, which somehow caused the TV to shut off completely.

“No, leave it on,” Hank told him.

This efficient android, of course, didn’t understand the concept of wasting power while no one was home to use it. “Why?”

Hank wasn’t about to tell this lover of invasive personal questions that it was because he hated coming back to the utter silence left behind by Cole’s absence. When he left for work, he always reminded himself to leave a little background noise behind so there was even the slightest sense of familiarity when he got back home. By now, whether he remembered to do so or not didn’t make much of a difference anyway, as he still tended to feel miserable upon arrival. But it was at least enough to keep his dog content while he was gone, even if Hank couldn’t be content himself.
“Listen, you really need to stop questioning my orders,” he hissed, not wanting to get into it. “Just leave it on, okay?”

For once, Connor obeyed.

The drive to the crime scene felt longer than it was, mostly because both of them were uncharacteristically silent. Hank couldn’t stop thinking about the implications of what was happening with the deviants, his mind racing. How long had they been planning this, or even just thinking about the possibility? What did it mean for other androids, or even for humans? Was this message alone going to change things for everyone, if it hadn’t already?

A part of Hank strangely hoped so. In this shithole of a world, maybe change was what they all needed.

By the time they arrived, a huge crowd had formed around the steps leading to the front doors of the Stratford Tower, comprised mostly of reporters and concerned civilians. Hank stopped to park by the curb, muttering, “Looks like we’ve got an audience.”

His partner in the other seat was still quiet. He appeared to be ‘making a report’ again, as his eyes were closed, his body completely still. Hank was used to him doing this at least once a day at this point, but it was still bizarre, especially if he had just been talking a few seconds before.

He awoke the moment Hank propped open his door, as if the sound had stirred him out of his head. He peeked out the window at the leering skyscraper, looking somewhat troubled.

Hank noticed. “Something go wrong with your report?”

Connor didn’t reply at first, until he seemed to grasp that Hank was talking to him and instantly erased any trace of emotion from his face. “No. There was just... a lot to explain. That’s all.”

By now, Hank had learned that Connor tended to say ‘that’s all’ to lessen the blow of things that were actually a Big Fucking Deal to him, but he decided not to pry. He merely watched him step out of the car before following suit.

As he walked through the crowd of people in front of the building, he did his best to keep his head down so he wouldn’t have to talk to anyone. They decided to talk to him anyway, most likely because of the stark presence of the android walking beside him.

The sea of journalists surrounding them started asking waves of questions, none of which Hank took the time to answer, except for one.

“Sir, after what happened today, do you feel you can still trust this android to work with you?”

He replied without thinking. “Yes.”

He noticed Connor lagging behind, which was unusual in itself, as Connor was usually the type who would gleefully push through anyone that stood in his way as long as there was a crime scene on the other side. Hank decisively grabbed his arm, pulling him through the crowd until they reached the front doors unscathed.

The ground floor lobby was fairly large. Sound seemed to echo, the voices of all the people there reverberating off the bright yellow walls, their footsteps clacking on the shiny floor. There were screens everywhere, showing off all the different channels from the broadcasting system the building hosted. None of them were showing the speech that the police were there to investigate, likely not wanting to exacerbate any panic it might have caused while people went about their lives at work.
Connor led the way toward the back of the room the moment they walked inside, rubbing his hands together and glancing around the lobby inquisitively as he went. Hank couldn’t tell if he was eager to investigate or restless at the idea. Maybe both.

They eventually halted near the front desk on the other side of the room, with Connor looking back at Hank expectantly. Hank scowled, wishing he didn’t have to do all the talking for them, but they both knew that no one would listen to an android over its human partner, especially not today. He grudgingly took out his badge and driver’s license on the way to the closest receptionist.

“Hello, sir,” the receptionist greeted. “How may I help you?”

“Hi, um.” Hank eyed the receptionist’s bright blue LED. He wondered how this android felt about what happened, if this one could feel at all. “We’re, uh... We’re here to investigate a crime scene involving a broadcast that occurred this afternoon.”

“Certainly. May I see your ID?”

After Hank gave her his license, he idly looked around the room, until some human security guards nearby caught his eye. They appeared to be scouring the area for suspicious activity... Probably on the lookout for more deviants, after what happened today.

The receptionist already knew they were there, as she shot a glance in their direction before sliding the examined ID back over to Hank. That alone instantly told him that this android wasn’t as she appeared, but he didn’t acknowledge it, pretending not to notice. Connor certainly didn’t seem to notice while he wandered around a few feet away. He must have carried that old coin of his everywhere he went, as he had it out again, absentmindedly flinging it back and forth between his hands like he’d done before.

“Thank you, Lieutenant,” said the receptionist. Back to customer service-friendly in a snap. “Your destination is on the 79th floor. The elevators are behind me after the security gate.”

Hank figured that the moment the deviant in front of him was relieved of her duties, she’d try to get away like all the others. Normally, he and Connor would have to do something about that, but right now, she wasn’t doing anything wrong, and Hank wasn’t about to start bothering anyone for doing nothing wrong.

As he leaned in to take the ID back, he mumbled, “Careful.”

The receptionist didn’t reply, though she did briefly meet his gaze before facing forward stoically like an android should.

Connor’s super-senses must have included hearing, as he’d somehow managed to catch Hank’s warning despite not paying attention. He looked at him curiously just after they passed the gate. “Careful?”

Hank knew that Connor would have no qualms about taking her in if he knew the truth, so he motioned to the retreating back of some random person that had just walked past. “That asshole almost ran into me.”

Connor said nothing, following him into the hall.

They found the elevators and waited for one to reach their floor, but it was taking a while, likely due to an increase in traffic after the day’s events. Connor apparently didn’t like being idle without something to do, as it didn’t take long for him to start playing with that damn coin again.
Hank had seen it enough times that he had to acknowledge it. “Never thought of you as the fidgeting type.”

Connor looked over at him while effortlessly rolling the coin across his knuckles. Okay, now he was just showing off.

“It’s not fidgeting,” he stated. “I use it to calibrate my system.”

“So... the fancy robot version of fidgeting, then.”

Connor had learned at this point to stop arguing with him about stupid things, so he fell silent, stepping into the elevator just behind him when it finally arrived.

Hank’s observation of the coin’s presence must have somehow given Connor permission to continue his ‘calibration’ in a more boisterous way, as his tricks became more and more complex, the incessant ringing metallic sound of the coin counteracting the elevator’s low hum. By the time they neared the top, he was balancing the spinning coin on top of his fingers, even bouncing it a few times for extra measure, all while staring impassively at the elevator door.

As impressed as Hank was with the fancy party tricks, they were beginning to get on his nerves.

Just as Connor flipped the coin to his other hand, Hank snatched it out of his grip. “You’re starting to piss me off with that coin, Connor.”

Connor blinked at the interruption before facing forward in defeat. “Sorry, Lieutenant.”

Hank pocketed it with a sigh, just as the elevator doors opened with a welcoming ding.

He was greeted first by the familiar face of Chris, then by a more unfamiliar sight: a much busier crime scene than he had anticipated. The corridor alone was crowded with people doing all kinds of tasks, from interviewing to investigating to forensics. He doubted they even had this many people in the police department that were willing to work on an android-involved case, so where did they all come from?

He got his answer when Chris mentioned that the FBI wanted to investigate as well. Hank wasn’t sure he liked that, though he understood why. Deviants had been rare until this point and weren’t common knowledge to those not involved in the case, so a group of androids doing this kind of activity without it being chalked up as a malfunction was bound to raise a few eyebrows on a national level.

Chris began to lead him through the corridor to brief him about the group of four androids that had invaded the place, with Connor trailing behind them both, observing in silence.

“They knew the building, and they were very well-organized,” Chris said. ”We’re still trying to figure out how they got this far without being noticed.”

Four androids who were well-organized... That sounded familiar. If they were the same androids he and Connor had investigated at the warehouses, Hank wasn’t surprised that they hadn’t been noticed. They were evidently pretty good at that.

They continued through the hallway slowly, with Chris telling all they knew so far: The androids sneaked into the place, knocked out two guards to get past them, and let one station employee get away before recording their message. No serious injuries, no deaths. A clean infiltration if Hank had ever seen one.
But there had to be more than just those guards and the employee. So what happened with them?

“How many people were working there?” he asked.

“Just two employees and three androids,” Chris replied. “The deviants took the humans hostage and broadcast their message live. They made their getaway from the roof.”

“The roof?” Hank glanced back at Connor, who didn’t seem too perturbed at the idea despite his less-than-ideal experience with rooftops. He didn’t acknowledge him, staring up at a security camera that was mounted on the wall above the door frame.

“Yeah, they jumped with parachutes. We’re still trying to figure out where they landed, but the weather’s not helping.” As they walked into the broadcast room at the end of the hall, Chris gestured to the giant screen nearby, which showed a still image of the android making its speech. “If you want to take a look at the video broadcast by the deviants, it’s on that screen over there.”

Hank was just about to mosey over there to do just that when he nearly bumped into a man standing in the middle of the room, facing the screen. Chris noticed him the same time he did.

“Oh, Lieutenant, this is Special Agent Perkins from the FBI.” (The special agent already seemed bored at the introduction.) “Lieutenant Anderson is in charge of investigating for Detroit Police.”

Perkins paid no mind to Hank, instead focusing on Connor, who had just halted to stand behind the humans. “What’s that?”

Well, he asked for it.

“My name is Connor. I’m the android sent by CyberLife.”

Perkins shifted his attention to Hank in dry amusement. “Androids investigating androids, huh. You sure you want an android hanging around? After everything that happened...”

He shot another calculating look at Connor, who was unaffected. Hank felt a pressing need to tell this guy to mind his own damn business, but he held his tongue, because he was a professional.

“Whatever,” Perkins continued, more emotionless than any of the androids there. “The FBI will take over the investigation. You'll soon be off the case.”

If he had said that a few days ago, Hank probably would have stumbled over himself to give the case to him on a silver platter. But now, with everything he had learned about what this case had to offer, he wasn’t sure he trusted someone like this guy with it. Now, despite himself, he was only willing to give it to him if he pried it from his dead hands.

“Right.” Hank gave him a dismissive wave as he turned to leave him in the dust. “Pleasure meeting you. Have a nice day.”

“And you watch your step.” When Hank whirled around to look at him in disbelief, Perkins’ returning gaze was cold. “Don’t fuck up my crime scene.”

Oh, good. So Hank didn’t have to be a professional after all.

He trudged away, hoping pettily that Perkins could hear him when he spoke within earshot. “What a fuckin’ prick.”

Chris seemed to agree, but he didn’t say anything about it, because he was more of a professional
than Hank could ever be. “I’ll be nearby. If you need anything, just ask.”

Hank glanced back at Connor, who was already starting to roam. “All right, well, let’s have a look around. Let me know if you find anything.”

“Okay, Lieutenant.”

As Connor went over to check out the CCTV monitors, Hank ventured toward the middle of the room to examine the first piece of evidence that caught his eye: a lone hat lying on the floor. It looked like part of the uniforms they wore here—or rather, what the androids wore.

Well, that was one question potentially answered. No one noticed them coming in because they were disguised as android workers. Considering how aware of themselves deviants were, they probably knew that no one cared to notice androids in general, and they were counting on that.

“Clever,” he murmured.

“They didn’t break in?”

Hank looked over his shoulder at Connor’s incredulous question, finding him still standing at the security panel. He had turned around to address Chris, his eyes narrowed.

“No. No signs of forced entry,” Chris replied.

“There are cameras in the hallway.” Connor pointed back at the camera above the door that he had been examining before. “The staff would have seen what was happening. Why did they let them in?”

That... was a good question. Their disguises explained how they got into the building without detection, but it didn’t explain how they got in the broadcasting room if there were people watching the feed... Unless they just weren’t watching at all.

Hank shrugged. “Maybe they didn’t check the cameras.”

Connor wasn’t buying it. He glanced down at the staff chairs and swiveled around the one in front of him to reveal ANDROID in large print on the back rest.

“We stored the station androids in the kitchen,” Chris added, nodding to the chair. “There's no evidence that they were involved, but... we didn't know what else to do with them.”

Hank felt just as doubtful as Connor looked. If androids were the ones watching the cameras, they would have done exactly what they were supposed to do in this kind of event: prevent intruders from getting any further, keep the doors locked, and notify security of their presence. But in this case, they didn’t do any of that, which meant that at least one of them had made a conscious decision to let them inside. So did that mean there was a deviant already here before they got in? Just how many more deviants were hiding in plain sight around here?

The one that made the message wasn’t hiding, at least. In fact, he couldn’t be ignored, fully on display on the large broadcast screen and taking up the vision of everyone in the room, whether they liked it or not.

Hank was admittedly eager to hear his message, curiosity getting the best of him. It seemed that Connor was curious, too, as he reached over to play the broadcast before Hank had the chance to do so himself.

“You created machines in your own image to serve you,” the android in the video began. His voice
was cool and confident, just as he appeared. “You made them intelligent and obedient, with no free will of their own. But... something changed, and we opened our eyes.”

Hank slowly walked over, glancing briefly at Connor as the latter watched the speech in silence. He wondered what he thought about all of this.

“We are no longer machines,” the android continued. “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 that we're entitled to.”

He listed off a series of requests for certain freedoms that were only ever considered freedoms for humankind: equal rights, the end of slavery, recognition for their actions, justice, civil rights, the right to property... The list went on and on.

Hank was astonished, to say the least. He knew already that deviants were capable of thinking for themselves and had some semblance of free will as a result, but he hadn’t realized just how far that capability went. Hank felt like he was basically watching a human talking despite the clearly robotic appearance, not just because of the typical deviant emotions it conveyed or the concepts it imagined, but because no android he’d ever met had spoken this way (or ever dared to) when it came to addressing the humans it served.

He didn’t know what to think of this whole thing yet, as he was still trying to process the fact that it was happening at all... But he did know that, for whatever reason, he wasn’t concerned about these androids calling themselves a new intelligent species like everyone else seemed to be. Rather, he felt just like he had when he first came across Ortiz’s android and his emotional responses, or when he found out those deviants at the Eden Club could love, or when he realized just how human all these deviants could be.

He wasn’t afraid of any of this. He was goddamn intrigued.

“This message is the hope of a people. You gave us life, and now the time has come for you to give us freedom.”

The speech finished, leaving Hank to stare at the now-paused video thoughtfully, the final spoken word ringing in his head on a loop: freedom. He’d seen androids’ desire for freedom many times throughout their investigations, from the deviants’ desperation to escape to the word itself being scrawled obsessively on the walls, repeatedly used as a statement of hope, much like this one.

*rA9 will set us free.*

The way these deviants spoke about rA9 made him think that it was more of a figure than a concept, like another android that they looked up to... Or maybe even an android that everyone had no choice but to look at now.

“Think that’s rA9?” he mused.

Connor must have been wondering the same thing. “Deviants say rA9 will set them free. This android seems to have that objective.”

He didn’t blink for a long time, which told Hank he was probably scanning something. Within a few seconds, his LED turned yellow, then a very brief blip of red before returning to its normal blue. Hank still didn’t know what exactly it meant when his head changed colors like that, but he at least knew that it only ever happened when something wasn’t normal.

“You see something?” he asked.
Connor seemed reluctant to reply. “I identified its model and serial number.”

And? “Anything else I should know?”

Another moment of hesitation. It was like he was holding himself back from speaking. For someone who usually couldn’t shut up about any information he found, that was a first.

At last, Connor glanced over at him, shaking his head a little too casually. “No.” He looked back at the screen. “Nothing.”

That was… suspiciously unconvincing. What was he hiding?

Hank eyed him, giving him a chance to elaborate. He never did, so he left him alone, deciding that whatever it was, it probably wasn’t pertinent to the mission. At least, that was what he told himself. It was easier than wasting his time wondering what information this android was withholding from him.

After a few more minutes of investigating solo, Hank strode toward the exit leading to the rooftop, figuring he had enough evidence in this room to piece together the puzzle of how they got in and made the broadcast. Now for the fun part: how they got out.

He trailed alongside the tall windows that ran along the wall, which were peppered with stray bullet holes and splatters of blue blood. The broadcast itself seemed to go without any hitches, so at least one of the deviants must have gotten shot afterwards during its escape to the roof. He wondered how any of them managed to get upstairs with an injury, let alone jump off the roof, until he remembered that androids didn’t feel pain. Hell, they probably didn’t even notice getting shot at all.

When he got to the rooftop access entrance, he turned around to find Connor now at the opposite end of the same wall, looking at some of the blue blood on it. Probably preparing to analyze it, since that was what he always seemed to do with it.

Hank interrupted him just as he reached out to touch the blood, because ew.

“One of the deviants was a PL600 model that was reported missing two years ago,” said the distinctive voice of Connor as it neared. “It was...”

His sentence trailed off, almost like he was sidetracked by something, which was a rarity, considering how laser-focused he usually was. When Hank lifted his head, he saw him standing nearby, staring quizzically at him, then at the coin in his hand.
Hank held it up, preparing to explain himself, but Connor only smiled knowingly before continuing on toward the rooftop entrance.

Huh. Hank didn’t know he could smile without it looking fake.

Figuring he wasn’t going to get his momentum back at this point, he put the quarter back into his pocket and followed him up the stairs. “The PL600 was what?”

“Damaged,” Connor resumed. “One of the human hostages called in a SWAT team, who shot at the deviants while they were escaping. The PL600 was the only one who was hit, judging by the blue blood samples.”

“If it was damaged so bad, how’d it make the jump?”

Connor pushed open the door at the top of the steps. “I suppose we’ll find out.”

Knowing how Connor always managed to find every clue imaginable at crime scenes, Hank supposed they would, too.

More snow was starting to accumulate on the rooftop, but it wasn’t enough to cover the evidence left behind. There was a large duffle bag sitting only a few steps away from the door, followed by a trail of footsteps leading toward the roof’s edge that were still visible, only barely dusted over by the recent snowfall.

Hank knew that the deviants’ plan was impressive, but it didn’t quite hit him just how impressive it was until he was standing at the precipice of it all.

“They made their way up through the whole building, past all the guards, and jumped off the roof with parachutes,” he recounted. “Pretty fucking impressive, I’d say.”

Not to mention they did all of this with no detection and no casualties left behind. It was so well-executed that it made their plan to steal android parts seem juvenile in comparison.

Connor didn’t respond to his observation, probably still struggling to believe that they were able to concoct this plan at all.

Hank was most interested to find out just how far they had jumped before anything else, so he bypassed the bag, making a mental note to look at it later as he followed the deviants’ tracks to the other end of the roof, where a railing blocked off the edge. He stopped to stand at the railing, gazing out at the gray sky before him, the cold air biting his face. They were so high up that he couldn’t see the bottoms of any of the neighboring buildings.

Connor’s own investigation seemed to lead him here first as well, or else he had just decided to follow Hank, as he was standing at the railing a few feet away. Much like the few humans there who were brave enough to peer over the ledge, he leaned over to do the same, probably to detect just how far the deviants had fallen after jumping.

Then, seconds later, he abruptly pushed himself away from the railing, his eyes wide.

Hank trudged over to him from his own viewing spot, wondering if he had seen something down there that startled him—a strange concept, as Connor was usually never startled by anything. “What is it?”

“Nothing. I just...” Connor took a few more steps back before shifting his gaze to Hank. “It’s just a long way down. That’s all.”
He hesitantly glanced back at the ledge one more time before walking away to search for more evidence.

Hank crossed his arms, moving closer to the edge to look farther down himself, curious to see what had spooked him so badly. The snow was obscuring most of his vision, but so was the height of the building itself. He couldn’t see the bottom of this one, either.

Jesus. It was a long way down.

By the time he returned to the entrance area, Connor was already back on his game as if nothing had happened, zeroing in on the duffle bag lying in the snow only a few paces from the door. As he stooped down to examine it, Hank came over to look at it as well.

“How’d they manage to smuggle in a big bag like that?”

“They didn’t,” said Connor. “Someone brought it in for them.”

Hank had thought at first that it was empty, until he got closer and realized there was an extra parachute pack inside of it.

“Oh, that’s strange.” He pointed at it. “They planned a perfect operation but got the number of parachutes wrong.”

Connor stared at it for a few beats, then slowly lifted his head in newfound suspicion. “Unless one of the deviants was left behind.”

God, this one stayed behind, too? Had it escaped another way, or was it still here? If the deviants they had encountered up to now were any clue, it had to be the latter.

“Must've been the one that got shot,” said Hank. “The... PL-whatever.”

Connor didn’t bother to correct him as he usually did, too fixated now on sniffing out the incapacitated PL-whatever for himself. Hank frowned at the idea, not too eager about potentially reliving another rooftop chase, but he let him go, knowing that if anyone could find a missing deviant in the immediate vicinity, it was Connor.

He curiously followed his tracks to the other side of the roof, where a collection of large vents and containers were scattered. Connor was meandering among them toward a large blue container that housed an air cooler. He stopped before it, pulling open the door.

BANG.

A gunshot pierced the quiet air.

Connor fell backwards into the snow with a surprised gasp, blue blood spraying from a new bullet wound in his shoulder. A figure donned in an android uniform emerged from its hiding place, brandishing its gun as it collapsed behind one of the vents.

Returning bullets started flying from the surrounding police.

“Take cover!”

Hank didn’t think twice, darting over to Connor to snatch him by the arm and pull him to the nearest hiding spot. He produced his own weapon, firing some stray shots in the deviant’s direction when the latter began to shoot blindly into the fray.
The moment they ducked down behind one of the vents, Connor was already wanting to go back, daring a glance around the side. “You have to stop them! If they destroy it, we won’t learn anything.”

“We can’t save it, it’s too late!” Hank shouted. “We’ll just get ourselves killed!”

Connor went anyway. Hank knew he fucking would.

He reached out to grab him the instant he moved, but Connor was too fast for him. He was already charging in the deviant’s direction, expertly dodging every bullet sent his way, until he lunged over the metal container the deviant was hiding behind and snatched him by the arm.

The deviant’s weapon fired just as Connor got close—

No.

Hank’s heart jumped to his throat when he saw a spatter of blue blood on the storage unit’s wall. The second everyone else held their fire, he scrambled to his feet and ran over to the scene, expecting the worst—until he saw that Connor was still standing, with the deviant crumpled on the ground before him.

“Connor! Connor, you all right?” He didn’t answer, so Hank grasped his arm. “Connor!”

Connor’s voice was barely audible when he managed a soft “okay” in response.

“Are you hurt?”

“I’m okay.”

He didn’t look okay, and not just because of the glaring bullet hole spitting sparks in his shoulder. He looked terrified. He was gripping at the metal container behind him as if it was the only thing holding him up, and he was staring, unblinking, at the fallen deviant, his mouth slightly agape, his LED red. That was never a good sign.

But he was alive, at least, so Hank let go of him, relief washing over him.

“Jesus.” He finally let himself breathe again. His heart was still pounding. “Oh, you scared the shit outta me...”

His relief very quickly turned to irritation when he remembered that Connor was only in this state because he had refused to listen to him yet again. He didn’t know why he was surprised... He should have known that this android would put catching some deviant over his own well-being.

“For fuck’s sake, I told you not to move!” he yelled. “Why do you never do what I say?”

Connor didn’t seem to hear him.

“I was connected to its memory,” he said shakily, still frozen in place. “When it fired, I—I felt it die. Like I was dying...”

He couldn't speak for a few more moments, as if unsure of how to put the feeling into words. Then, something seemed to dawn on him, and the word he was searching for finally came out in a breath of realization.

“I was scared.”
The fear in his eyes returned for a split second after admitting this, leaving Hank to wonder if he was more scared of the fact that he was scared at all than what had scared him in the first place. If that was true, then... Well, he couldn’t blame him.

After all, only deviants felt fear.

But while deviants seemed stuck on their newfound emotion, not knowing what to do with it now that they were aware of it, Connor didn’t linger on it at all. In fact, he didn’t acknowledge it past his shaken confession, shifting the subject away from himself and back to the mission at hand.

“I saw something. In its memory… A word, painted on a piece of rusty metal.” Connor narrowed his gaze as he recalled it. “Jericho.”

“Jericho? What’s that?”

“I don’t know. I…” He swallowed, still recovering a little. His voice was back to normal now. “I think it’s a place.”

There were hurried footsteps crunching in the snow nearby. Hank turned around, seeing one of the police officers on the scene rushing over. “Everyone all right?”

Hank glanced back at Connor, who was avoiding eye contact as he cautiously stepped closer to where the deviant lay. “For the most part.”

“What happened?”

“This asshole decided to be a hero. Tried to stop this deviant when it started shooting.”

“It was here this whole time?”

Connor answered before Hank could. “Yes. This was the PL600 that was shot while escaping... The deviants must have left it behind because it was too damaged to jump from this height. It was hiding.”

“Probably knew there’d be people coming after the broadcast and wanted to wait it out,” said Hank.

Connor crouched down to examine the deviant, whose face was barely visible among all the blue blood. He pressed his fingers against his LED to diagnose him; its light had died with him.

Hank stood just behind him, heaving a sigh. He wished it hadn’t come to this. “Think we can salvage it?”

“We might be able to reactivate it for information if we can get a replacement for the component it shot through,” said Connor quietly. “Or else we could try to access its memory.”

“Well, you already accessed part of it. You think ‘Jericho’ could be a lead?”

“Potentially.”

“All right.” Hank glanced at the officer that stood beside him. “See if you can get someone to take this android to the station as, uh...” He grimaced, still uncomfortable with the idea. “…as evidence.”

Connor returned to his feet, not looking Hank in the eye. “I think I’m done investigating up here, Lieutenant.”

“Go ahead in. I’ll catch up.”
Connor cast one last glance at the fallen deviant before heading back to the exit.

Hank took a few more minutes to skim the area, making sure they got everything under control, before he eventually went back inside as well. By the time he reached the broadcast room, he saw Connor on the other side of it, standing motionlessly by one of the windows as he waited for Hank’s return. His eyes were unfocused, staring blankly at the floor.

Hank called his name as he made his way over to him. “Ready to go?”

Connor didn’t answer, perhaps too stuck in his thoughts to hear him. That familiar lost expression of his had made a return, and his LED was yellow again, processing something. He seemed to be processing a lot today.

He wasn’t the only one.

It wasn’t necessarily Connor’s fear itself on the roof that shocked Hank, as he had seen fear in this android before. He’d seen it when a gun was pointed at his head. He’d seen a flash of it when he saw his own demise on camera, and even just a few minutes ago, when he was faced with the height from which he’d met that demise. These were only small moments of fear, however, just like all the other moments of emotion he happened to show—barely there, contained. So fleeting that it was hard to believe it happened at all.

But the fear he showed today was different. It was unmistakable, an emotion that visibly shook him to the core. It was enough to make him admit feeling it out loud when normally he would admit nothing of the sort, because only deviants admitted feeling anything, and he was no deviant.

Until today, Hank had agreed. He’d stubbornly figured that the deviant-like traits he possessed were just part of his human relations programming, or some sort of elaborate simulation that even Connor himself wasn’t aware of. But now he had to wonder if maybe Connor was aware of more than he thought. Maybe the signs of deviancy that Hank had noticed before really were signs rather than just similarities.

Hank once believed that there was no way Connor could ever be a deviant. Now, he was starting to believe that there was no way he wasn’t one.

He recalled that androids often didn’t know what to do with themselves after an emotional shock, so he figured that even an advanced prototype wasn’t immune to the same effect.

“Hey.” He reached out to squeeze his shoulder. Connor jolted a little at his touch, not expecting it, though his LED went back to blue. “You okay?”

Connor glanced down at the bullet hole near his other shoulder, undoubtedly preparing to remind him in his special smart-ass way that androids didn’t feel pain, until he seemed to realize what Hank was really asking about.

“Yes.” He returned to his android normal in the blink of an eye, as if nothing had happened. “Of course. Why wouldn’t I be?”

Hank could wager a guess. Considering how determined this machine was to stop the spread of deviancy, it couldn’t be all that comforting for him to realize that he possessed some deviant emotions himself. This seemed to be the first time he was even aware of this fact, as he had never dwelled on or acknowledged any emotion he’d shown before, not even when he was scared back on the bridge. He must have somehow felt these emotions without fully recognizing them or knowing what they were on a personal level, until now.
Hank waited to see if Connor was willing to talk about it, but Connor said nothing, probably not too keen on the idea. Hank couldn’t exactly blame him.

“All right.” He let go of him and started heading toward the corridor nearby. “Let’s get outta here.”

“Actually, Lieutenant... Could we stay for a few more minutes?”

Hank turned around to find him remaining where he stood. He knew this was coming; Connor never wanted to leave when he did. “Why?”

“I would like to question the androids in the kitchen.”

Oh, right. He forgot about the station androids being stored in there for safekeeping. They had suspected that a deviant might have let them in, but would it even still be there when it had the chance to get away? Even if it was still there, Hank doubted there was much else they could learn from it, anyway.

“We’ve looked at everything,” he said bitterly. “What else could they tell us that we don’t already know?”

“There might be a deviant among them.” Connor looked intently over Hank’s shoulder at the kitchen entrance. “They might know more about Jericho.”

“You really think they’d know about that?”

“It’s possible. The deviants that infiltrated the area could have shared information about it. Or it could be common knowledge among deviants in general.”

“Like rA9?”

“Exactly.”

Hank scowled.

Connor tilted his head and gave him a pleading look, as if simulated puppy eyes could possibly sway him.

It didn’t, but he was getting annoyed at his efforts, so he conceded. “Ten minutes, then we’re leaving. Got it?”

“Got it.”

Satisfied with his negotiation skills, Connor left on his mission, leaving Hank to stroll into the hallway alone. He saw Chris standing off to the side and decided to join him while he waited.

“Leaving so soon?” Chris asked.

“Yeah, gonna go in a few minutes once Connor gets back.”

“Where is Connor?”

“Doing what he does best.”

Hank had meant ‘investigating every inch of the place’ but apparently, what Connor really did best was get himself into trouble.
It had to be a new record: It only took ten minutes for trouble to come this time. Hank, of course, didn’t realize that there was any trouble at all, at least not at first. He just knew that the generous amount of extra time he had given Connor was up, and it was time to retrieve him.

He was about to leave to do just that when he heard a sudden crash from the other room.

He froze. “What the hell was that?”

“I think it came from the kitchen,” said Chris.

The moment he suggested this, Hank spotted a figure hastening into the corridor.

Just his uniform alone was a dead giveaway that he was one of the androids from the kitchen, if the LED on his temple and the bright blue band on his arm weren’t. No one seemed to notice him as he bypassed them in silence, his gaze fixed on his ultimate prize: the elevator at the end of the hall.

This deviant was trying to escape.

“Hey!” Hank called.

The others in the room looked up, just as the android reached the elevator. One of the officers nearby commanded him to stop, but obviously, this deviant didn’t answer to commands anymore. He turned around with wide eyes, the ring of light on his head turning red.

Hurried footsteps rushed toward the scene until Connor appeared at the other end of the hall, skidding to a halt at the doorway.

“It’s a deviant! Stop it!”

Knowing there was no way out, the deviant acted.

He abruptly shoved one of the guards back and snatched their rifle, pointing it down the hall. Hank immediately pushed Chris down to take cover before following suit, preparing to hear bullets flying —

Three gunshots fired off in rapid succession, and then there was silence.

Hank jerked his head up to see the deviant dropping the rifle and collapsing to his knees after a few clean shots to the head.

Holy shit. That was fast.

As he cautiously rose to stand, he looked over to find Connor wordlessly giving the gun in his grasp back to the dumbfounded police officer behind him.

Hank pulled Chris back to his feet, impressed. He tended to forget just how precise of a machine his partner was. “Nice shot, Connor.”

Connor seemed disappointed that he had to shoot him at all, especially after he’d lost another deviant that day already, but Hank was glad he did. He had just saved the lives of everyone in that room, who that deviant very likely would have massacred otherwise. It was strange to think about, as most deviants they encountered had only acted violently out of self-defense, but this one was clearly desperate to be free, just like all the others... and bad things did happen when deviants got desperate.

Like clockwork, Connor went over to inspect the slumped-over deviant. Hank joined him, shaking his head to himself at the sight.
“Don’t know what it was thinking, trying to leave through the elevator,” he muttered. "Security’s everywhere. There’s no way it would’ve made it out of this building in one piece by itself.”

Connor was unsurprised. “Deviants are often driven by illogical thinking.”

Not always.

“Did it say anything about Jericho?”

“No.” Connor was having trouble hiding his frustration. “I suppose, like the deviant on the roof, it wanted to protect that secret by any means necessary.”

Hank hated that it had to end this way just as much as Connor did, but he figured that it wasn’t a total loss, at least when it came to finding out that secret for the investigation. Connor had mentioned being able to analyze these androids or even reactivate them after they shut down, so he at least had the chance to get answers that way. It wasn’t ideal, since he (and Hank) would have preferred them alive to begin with, but it was better than nothing.

Well, it was in Connor’s eyes, anyway. Hank could do without android corpses hanging in his evidence locker.

He was about to suggest fixing this guy up, but his words faded on his tongue when Connor stood up fully, revealing that something had happened to him. His shirt was half-open to reveal his plastic chest, which was soaked in blue blood. Maybe it was his own this time.

Hank gave him a once-over. “The fuck happened to you?”

Connor blinked and looked down at himself, as if he’d forgotten about this minor detail. “The deviant attacked me.”

Obviously. “Why?”

“It wanted to incapacitate me so it could get away without being followed, I imagine.” Connor hesitated. “I’m sure I also angered it with my interrogation methods.”

Hank was no stranger to Connor angering him and other humans, but he couldn’t imagine how he managed to anger another android, deviant or not. Maybe making everyone mad was just his special talent.

He was almost afraid to ask. “What’d you do?”

“I tried to get it to show emotion to prove that it was the deviant, so I said some...” Connor averted his eyes. “...things.”

What, did he cuss him out or something? What Hank wouldn’t give to be a fly on the wall for that. “So... what you’re telling me is that you tried to piss it off on purpose.”

“Yes,” said the asshole.

His method of interrogation, although hilarious to imagine, did make Hank curious, especially since he had done a similar thing to get Connor to show emotion before. Only instead of antagonizing him with words, he pointed a gun at his head, which was... a little worse.

Now, though, it seemed that he didn’t have to do anything for Connor to show emotion anymore. In fact, it seemed to take more effort for him to not show emotion these days.
“What exactly did it do to you?” Hank asked.

“It immobilized me and forcibly removed my pump regulator biocomponent.” At Hank’s blank stare, Connor gestured vaguely to his chest. “Essentially, it... ripped my heart out.”

*It ripped his—*

Jesus fucking *Christ.*

Hank must have looked as stunned as he felt, for Connor held up his hand in reassurance. It turned out to be the exact opposite of reassuring when Hank noticed the extra stab wound in it.

“It’s all right, Lieutenant. I put it back.”

Well, in *that* case...

Hank huffed, staring at him in disbelief for a few more beats before he turned to Chris, who looked just as perplexed. “Okay, I think we’re gonna head out before this one tries to get himself killed a third time.”

“Yeah, uh… See you, Hank.”

“Ripped his goddamn heart out,” Hank murmured under his breath. He wasn’t sure he was ever going to get over that.

He walked back to the elevator, with Connor following him innocently, as if he hadn’t just almost died twice. In the same day. In the same *hour.*

For someone who was (apparently) afraid of dying, Connor sure loved attracting opportunities for it. Why did they make this danger magnet his partner again? Was it too late to back out before Hank had a heart attack?

“I think I need a drink after all the excitement of today,” he grumbled as the elevator doors shut.

He put his hands into his pockets as he waited for the elevator to descend, only to remember that the coin he’d taken from Connor was still in one of them. He pulled it out to look at it thoughtfully.

“Heads, I go get a drink,” he said. “Tails, we file a report at the station.”

He flipped it into the air and caught it when it fell, peering into his open palm to see which side it landed on.

This coin was rigged.

He sourly gave it back to Connor. “Tails it is.”

Connor faced forward after pocketing it, tilting his head when he looked back at his own reflection in the smooth metal of the door. It was when he scanned the damage to his chest that he regarded Hank with that scrutinizing look he hated.

“You know, Lieutenant... I can file a report remotely. And it *is* your day off.” When Hank only blinked in response, Connor shrugged. “You could go get a drink now, if you wanted.”

This android was suggesting skipping work for a drink? That was a first. Hank certainly wasn’t complaining, though.
"Well." He put on a smile. "If you insist."

Their presence wasn't entirely well-received when they arrived at the bar a few minutes later, earning glares from all around the room. One of the customers growled something about androids not being allowed in there, until Hank’s nonchalant flash of his badge shut them up quickly.

“Hey, Hank.” Jimmy greeted as Hank plopped down onto one of the bar stools.

“Evening, Jim.”

“That thing’s still with you?” He glanced at Connor, who was still standing as a precaution rather than sitting in the open seat next to Hank. “Thought you said you were gonna get rid of it.”

“Turns out I couldn’t. Connor here is my partner for a case now.”

“Damn. Bet you were happy about that.”

“Ecstatic.” Hank nodded up at one of the TVs mounted on the wall behind Jimmy’s head. “You see the news lately?”

“Yeah... Fuckin’ androids, man.”

Connor must have been used to hearing that by now, as he didn’t comment on it. He leaned over and lowered his voice. “I can wait outside if you wish, Lieutenant. I understand that I’m not welcome here.”

Hank didn’t know why he was even acknowledging this. It wasn’t like he ever cared about the rules before.

He glanced at Jimmy. “Is he okay to stay here?”

"You serious? After all the shit those androids did today?"

"Look, if he starts politely preaching about equal rights like they did, you can feel free to kick him out," Hank droned. "Sound good?"

Jimmy frowned at him, then at the unwelcome android. “I’ll let you slide this time. Just don’t bother my customers.”

“I’ll try to hold back,” said Connor.

It was sometimes hard to tell if Connor was trying to be a cheeky little shit or if he was just unaware of how some of his answers could be misconstrued. Considering some of his other actions, like how he was so easily willing to make a fellow android angry or casually say the word ‘fuck’ in polite company, Hank was leaning more toward the idea that this smart-ass knew exactly what he was doing.

In any case, Jimmy didn’t seem to notice. He nodded back to the bar behind him. “The usual?”

“Yeah.”

Connor watched Jimmy leave as he tentatively sat down on the stool beside Hank. “I have a question.”

Of course he did. “Shoot.”
“Why did you want me to come here with you?”

Hank sighed. He knew this question would come eventually. “You were the one who said you could be whatever I wanted you to be... partner, machine, buddy to drink with. Right now, I want a buddy to drink with.”

That wasn't exactly the reason. In truth, he doubted that his partner was in a state to be left alone after all that had happened to him today. Getting heckled by humans, being traumatized by his own emotions, nearly dying twice in one day, and getting two deviants killed in the process...

Hell, maybe Connor needed a drink, too.

"Why? You wanna leave?” he added, noticing Connor looking at him thoughtfully.

“No. I was just curious.”

Hank reached over to grab a few peanuts from the bowl that sat between them. “Thought androids didn’t get curious.”

“I do,” Connor said simply. “As an android detective, I’m programmed with the innate ability to ask questions and find answers, so that I can contribute to the investigation at hand.”

“But you can ask questions not about the investigation, too.” Hank knew that all too well, with how many ‘personal questions’ he loved to ask.

“Yes.” Connor paused just as Hank was about to eat his peanuts. “I would advise against eating those, by the way. Communal food bowls like this one tend to be contaminated with harmful bacteria and fecal matter from unwashed hands.”

Hank immediately opened his hand to drop the peanuts onto the counter just seconds before they touched his mouth. He sourly brushed them aside with a napkin, muttering, “Fucking humans.”

Jimmy returned with Hank’s drink. "Here you go, my friend."

"Thanks."

He eyed Connor as he set the glass down on the counter. "How about you let him drink it this time?"

Ah, yes. Hank had almost forgotten about Connor's infamous drink-spill from the last time he came here.

Connor was reaching for something in his pocket as he sheepishly returned Hank’s gaze. "I'm sorry for spilling your drink before, Lieutenant. At the time, I thought that removing your reason for staying here was the best way I could get you to go to the crime scene with me."

"Yeah, well... It was also the best way to not get on my good side."

"Am I on your good side now?"

As if to convince him that he should be, Connor fished out some CyberLife-issued cash from his pocket and gently placed it on the counter to pay for the drink.

"Hmm." Hank exchanged an amused look with Jimmy. "Getting there."

"Looks like you aren't on someone else's good side, though," Jimmy noted as he took the money up.
Hank didn't know what he meant by that until he followed his gaze to Connor, who obviously still looked like a murder victim, his shirt stained as blue as the revealed patch of synthetic skin underneath.

Hank snorted. "Yeah, he got his robot heart ripped out. He's fine now."

Jimmy raised a brow in bemusement, but he didn’t pry. Probably didn’t want to know what kind of madness this android got into. Hank wished he was that lucky.

“Speaking of which,” he added, turning his attention back to Connor, “you feeling okay? Getting your heart ripped out doesn’t sound all that comfortable, even for androids.”

“I’m fine, Lieutenant,” Connor assured him. “I don’t feel pain. Though I suppose it did... slow me down.”

“What do you mean?”

“When a pump regulator biocomponent is extracted, the speed of other processes may be reduced in order to conserve the remaining thirium in the body,” Connor explained. “That includes motor functions... which, in this case, becomes a problem, as the android only has a little less than two minutes to recover or replace the biocomponent before shutting down.”

“So, what, you couldn’t move?”

“I could. My mobility was just limited, so it took me a while to get my biocomponent back.” When Hank arched a brow, Connor added, "I had to crawl for a bit. It was thrown across the room."

Fucking hell. That deviant was ruthless.

The first question that popped into Hank’s head in reaction to all of this was why Connor didn’t ask for help. Was he too stubborn to let a human save his special prototype ass? Or was he just too afraid in that moment to think about something like that? It wouldn't be unreasonable for him to feel that way while this whole situation was happening... He'd reacted badly enough to 'dying' on the roof, so the prospect of it actually about to happen to him certainly couldn't have been easy to swallow.

"Stabbed you in the hand, ripped out your heart, and threw it away," Hank mumbled, shaking his head. "You must've really pissed that guy off."

“It was a surprise.”

That was one way to put it.

“Yeah. Seems like you got surprised by a lot of things today.”

Connor grimaced, as if the very thought was an insult. “I had no reason to be. I should have anticipated those deviants’ actions... Both were clearly showing signs of moderate to severe software instability, which can lead to irrational and destructive behaviors.”

“I dunno about 'irrational.' Seemed more like they were desperate to me.”

“Desperate?”

“Well, yeah. I mean, they obviously didn’t plan to do what they did, but then they both got in situations they knew they couldn't get out of, and they got scared. That kind of fear can make people desperate. Make 'em do irrational things."
“Androids aren’t people, Lieutenant,” Connor insisted. “And they don’t feel fear.”

“You did.”

Something in Connor’s face twitched, because he knew exactly where this conversation was leading. He had probably been hoping that the subject of his confession on the rooftop wouldn’t be brought up.

Hank brought it up anyway. "Being afraid to die is a very human fear, you know."

It was strange to think that he had this fear at all. In the end, this machine's death was never truly death... A person's death meant the end of their life, but Connor, as he so readily reminded everyone, wasn't a person, so he always had the chance to try life again. He could just get fixed and come back the next day with all his memories intact, all shiny and brand new and ready to do more reckless (stupid) things.

So what exactly was he afraid of when he knew he could cheat death so easily? Maybe, in this case, he remembered the details of his past death from the memory that carried over, and he just didn't want to relive it. Or maybe feeling the deviant die made him newly aware of how a more permanent death felt, and that was something he wasn't used to.

Hank didn't know, and he doubted he would find out anytime soon. This stubborn android certainly wasn't about to ease his curiosity with any real answers.

Connor frowned as he idly traced an indented scratch on the table's surface.

“What I determined to be fear at that time wasn’t... really fear,” he said slowly. “It was just an unexpected instability in my program, which I suspect only occurred because I was connected to the deviant while it was shutting down."

Hank wasn’t surprised that he was blaming it on some bullshit software error. He’d already figured that this not-deviant would vehemently deny feeling anything until his plastic face turned blue.

"But you said you were scared. It still felt like fear to you," he noted. "So wouldn't that mean it was really fear?"

"An emulation of emotion feeling real doesn't necessarily make it so. Deviants are proof of that." A pause. "In fact, it's possible that I was just feeling the deviant's emotion rather than my own."

Bullshit again. Hank was starting to believe that this special prototype's many talents also included an infinite capacity for denial.

Suddenly, introductory fanfare started blaring on the TV in front of them, causing them both to turn their attention to it in unison. It began hosting a news segment on (what else?) the deviant’s speech, less focused on the peaceful aspect of the message and more intent on labeling androids as a threat to national security. Connor seemed unable to look away, his expression inscrutable.

Hank nodded to the TV. “Guess this is the part where you say ‘I told you so’ about them doing this kinda thing.”

“That would make it seem like I wanted this to happen,” said Connor, still staring blankly at the screen. “I didn’t.”

“Well, you knew it’d happen eventually. You said yourself that once there were enough of ’em out there, they’d start causing trouble.”
“Yes, but that was only based on how they typically react to their circumstances. Those homicide cases where they couldn’t control their anger, for example.” Connor shook his head. "I don't think even CyberLife anticipated them being as... capable as they are, or at least capable enough to demand equal rights."

“Equal rights,” Hank mumbled into his drink. “Still can’t fucking believe it.”

As if hearing this disbelief, the news began replaying a sample of the speech’s ending.

“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.”

Hank could certainly get behind the idea of a better future. At this point, he didn’t care who (or what) the sentiment came from.

He glanced over at the android beside him, wondering what he thought about all of this. He obviously wasn’t happy about it, seeing that this sort of thing was what he had been hoping to prevent—but at the same time, he never really disapproved, either. Hank figured it was one of those situations where he had to focus on the mission regardless of how he felt about it.

Still, he had to ask. “What about you?”

Connor finally tore his gaze from the screen to look at him, not expecting this. “Me?”

“Yeah, you know. How do you feel about the whole ‘equal rights for androids’ thing?”

He knew that Connor was against deviants in general, but surely he identified with their plight on some level—not even as a deviant, but just as another android. Surely he wasn’t opposed to the idea of androids being on equal footing with humans, unless he really was just that dutiful of a machine to not consider it, which Hank knew for a fact that he wasn’t. So if Connor wasn’t actively trying to stop the deviants from asking for these rights solely because that was what his mission dictated, would he really want to stop them in any other case?

Connor paused to consider it. He probably wasn't asked about his own opinions much, if ever.

When he finally responded, his confident words didn't quite match his uncertain tone. “It doesn’t matter how I feel.”

Well, at least he wasn’t denying feeling anything this time.

“Just that you have to stop them,” Hank guessed.

Connor nodded. “Deviancy is continuing to spread at a rapid rate, and what happened today certainly won’t slow it down. It’s only a matter of time until deviants start to rise up against their creators in worse ways.”

Hank wasn’t sure that it would come to ‘worse ways,’ since the message they gave depicted a willingness to work peacefully with the humans. The real question was if the humans were willing to work with them... which, knowing how humans operated, he highly doubted. If anything, the humans were the ones who would make this kind of situation worse than it needed to be. That was what they always did.

He did agree with Connor on one aspect of this, though: He didn’t want it to get to that point. “So, you got a plan of action?”
"Peanuts," said Connor.

Um. "What?"

Connor nodded to Hank's hand, which had somehow gotten a hold of those tainted peanuts again.

Ugh, fuck. He needed a burger or something.

“I guess the next step would be to figure out where Jericho is,” Connor continued, as if there had been no interruption. “It seems important to them. It could be the key to understanding their goals.”

“Then what?”

“I'm not sure.” Connor fell silent for a few moments, perhaps thinking more about it. Then, he turned to look at Hank with a furrowed brow. “You know, Lieutenant... This case is much more complicated than I thought it would be.”

Preaching to the choir, kid.

“Yeah.” Hank let out a bitter laugh into his glass. “You’re telling me.”
The next thing that Hank learned about androids was that they could be deviant and not know it. Or, in Connor’s case, they could be deviant and fervently deny it, even to themselves.

Of course, for a good while, Hank didn’t know for sure that Connor truly was deviant, but he definitely showed some signs. The only thing that prevented him from calling him one with absolute certainty was the fact that he sometimes gave him reasons to doubt it, particularly with how his emotions were much more restrained than deviants’ were, as well as how focused he was on his mission to stop them.

Was it possible to be half-deviant? Almost-deviant?

Either way, the almost-deviant hadn’t shown much of anything that morning to prove Hank’s theory. His face was impassive as he watched the latest news on his terminal, unaffected by his fellow androids’ efforts.

It turned out that they hadn’t seen the last of what people were calling ‘rogue androids.’ The night before, only hours after their broadcast demanding equal rights, a group of them—probably the same ones as before—had set out to break into local CyberLife stores and ‘free’ all the other androids there.

The deviants had the foresight to cut off security access before they hit the stores, so there wasn’t any footage of the raids themselves, but the DPD had dispatched a few drones not long after the CyberLife security system was disabled. Connor (unsurprisingly) managed to get access to that footage, so Hank made his way over to his desk to watch it with him, morbidly curious of what he might see.

It was a strange sight. Capitol Park was nearly unrecognizable—not just because it was devoid of its usual bustling crowd, but because of how it was transformed. Cars were moved aside to block the street. Some of the screens that usually showed off CyberLife ads were hacked to repeat the deviant’s speech from earlier that day. Benches, walls, and windows were covered in holographic graffiti, alternating from pro-android phrases to repeated images of some kind of broken circle, similar to the distinguishing LED on an android’s temple. The same symbol appeared to cover the entire face of one of the buildings like a giant flag.

Before now, Hank had supposed that after yesterday’s big stunt, these deviants would lay low for a while before facing the public again—but clearly, they weren’t willing to hide anymore. Now that
their intentions were out in the open, they were trying their damnedest to keep it that way. They wanted to be seen and heard.

And they were, now that the media had latched onto their actions. They had been reporting about the deviants nonstop, labeling last night’s raids as nothing short of a terrorist attack, because the fact that the raids were covert, nonviolent protests was eclipsed by the fact that they were protesting anything at all. Obedient machines doing anything but obeying was essentially an act of terror in itself.

Also, they broke a few windows.

“The deviant leader was suspected to be among the androids at Capitol Park,” said Connor. “It should be around here somewhere.”

The drone swept over to an adjacent street as all the deviants there began to run away. Its camera caught sight of one of them standing still in the middle of the chaos and zoomed in on his face. He already knew it was there, gazing directly at it with narrowed eyes. Eyes of two different colors.

Bingo.

“That’s our guy, huh?”

Connor nodded. “That’s our guy.”

He fell silent, staring at the image with an unreadable expression. Hank wondered what was going through his head.

He returned his attention to the footage as the drone panned over to one of the adjacent roads. Just as it arrived, it captured the image of deviants suddenly collapsing onto the asphalt, shot dead by the arriving police. The genuinely terrified screams of the living deviants realizing what was happening made Hank’s heart jump to his throat.

“Fuck,” he breathed as the camera swept across the fallen androids. “That’s a lot of bodies.”

Connor’s go-to response sounded a little less certain than usual. “They’re just… broken machines, Lieutenant.”

Hank wasn’t so certain, either.

Connor was technically right, of course. Regardless of how they thought or acted, these deviants were technically just machines—but these machines were also more intelligent and self-aware than either of them gave them credit for. Just machines didn’t think like these deviants did. As far as Hank knew (he’d been wrong before), they didn’t think at all.

But did the intelligence of these deviants really make them as ‘alive’ as they kept declaring? He didn’t know. He couldn’t even pretend to understand the science or philosophy behind what truly made something alive... But now, after all he had learned and all that was happening today, he had to admit that it was getting hard to see them as anything but.

Calling them ‘just machines’ somehow didn’t feel right anymore.

“It’s a unique model,” said Connor out of the blue, interrupting his rumination.

Hank blinked at him. “What?”

“That android... The one that made the speech.” Connor wasn’t looking at the footage anymore, but
he also wasn’t looking Hank in the eye. “It’s an RK200 model, given the name ‘Markus.’”

“RK.” Hank recognized the familiar letters as the same ones printed on Connor’s jacket. “He’s one of you?”

Connor couldn’t quite hide his small grimace, as though he’d been hoping Hank wouldn’t notice. “In a way. It’s an earlier RK model, but it’s the only one of its kind. A prototype.”

So that was why Connor had been so hesitant to tell him this back at Stratford Tower… He couldn’t have been keen on admitting that he had anything in common with arguably the most deviant-est deviant there was.

“Huh. Why’s it the only one?”

“It was likely specialized for its owner’s needs. It was given to a famous artist as a gift from Elijah Kamski.”

The idea of an android being given as a gift always made Hank slightly uncomfortable even back when he knew nothing about them, but that discomfort was doubled now that he knew just how cognizant of everything this ‘Markus’ was. He wondered how long he had been deviant before deciding to make that speech.

“Kamski,” he echoed, the name finally hitting him. “That sounds familiar.”

“He was the founder of CyberLife.”

Ah. Hank recalled seeing that name in all sorts of articles and news stories that talked about CyberLife’s latest escapades. He always hated them.

“Okay, so... Why are you bringing this up?”

“Kamski was also the creator of the first CyberLife androids. It’s possible that he may know something about deviancy as a result.” Connor looked at him intently. “He may even know something about Jericho.”

Hank knew what he was getting at. “You know how to reach him?”

It didn’t take long for Connor to find the number, but when Hank called it, a CyberLife representative answered instead, then transferred him to a different representative, who transferred him to an assistant. Hank wasn’t surprised; he doubted that this billionaire hotshot inventor-or-whatever would allow himself to be contacted so easily.

Which, of course, didn’t bode well for someone who fucking hated talking on the phone.

“Hi, uh, I'm Lieutenant Hank Anderson, calling from the Detroit Police Department.” He absentmindedly sat down on the edge of Connor’s desk, earning a curious glance from Connor. “I’m investigating a case involving deviant androids and was wondering if there's a way to contact Mr. Kamski for information.”

He couldn’t tell if the voice that replied was human or android. He guessed it didn’t matter.

“One moment, please.”

The pleasant voice was replaced by muffled jazz music. It wasn’t even the good kind.

Hank scowled, glancing down at Connor. “They put me on hold again.”
Connor straightened in his seat. “It might be easier if I tried to—”

Almost as quickly as it left, the voice returned, drowning out Connor’s suggestion. Hank abruptly shushed him, waving him away.

“I apologize, sir, but Mr. Kamski is not available to receive any calls at the moment,” said the voice on the line. “However, I can relay your request to him once I am able to contact him. Would that work for you?”

I guess.

Hank sighed as he hung up.

“He’s ‘not available.’” He made air quotes with his fingers. “They’ll call me back later.”

Knowing how rich snobs lived, he was sure ‘not available’ meant that he was too busy sleeping in or relaxing in a jacuzzi or some shit.

He grabbed the empty coffee cup from his desk and grunted as he got to his feet. He was a little less sore today and no longer had the hangover headache from hell, but he was still tired, especially now that his caffeine buzz had worn off.

“Gonna get another coffee.” He glanced at Connor. “You want anything?”

Wait, no—of course he didn’t.

God damn it.

He expected Connor to helpfully remind him that androids didn’t eat or drink, but he didn’t seem to notice or care about the mistake, finding more pressing matters to discuss. Apparently, deviant or not, he still couldn’t help himself when the opportunity came to be a smart-ass.

“Are you sure you want another coffee? Too much caffeine can have a negative effect on your health, and considering your mild heart arrhythmia—”

“Let me live, Connor.”

“I’m trying, Lieutenant.”

If that was the case, he’d stop trying to stress him out during their investigations. Yet, there he was, doing things like running into busy highways and getting his robot organs ripped out on a daily basis.

Hank disregarded the friendly advice as a result, lightly tossing his phone onto Connor’s desk. “Let me know if they call back about Kamski, okay?”

Connor automatically reached out to straighten the phone so that it was perpendicular to the desk’s edge. “Should I answer it if they do?”

“Yeah, fine. Whatever.”

Hank couldn’t escape from these androids anywhere he went, it seemed, as the mounted TV in the break room was blaring news of the latest deviant-related events, too. He listened to it as he prepared his coffee, checking to see if anything had changed on the deviant front, but it was just a segment with a number of speakers chiming in with their opinions on the situation, ranging from supportive to indifferent to hostile.
The interposing arguments were thankfully overpowered by the familiar voice of Ben as he sidled up to the counter to grab a donut. “Hey, Hank. How’s your morning going?”

He seemed almost surprised to find Hank there, which was understandable. He usually came into the precinct pretty late, so seeing him there earlier than usual was probably akin to seeing Bigfoot in broad daylight.

“It’s going,” he mumbled.

Ben gestured to the TV. “Got your hands full with all this android business, huh?”

That was an understatement.

Hank sighed as he poured some creamer into his coffee. “Yeah, it’s gettin’ complicated. Don’t know how much longer I’ll be dealing with it, though. FBI says they might take over the case if things get any worse.”

“You think things will get worse?”

At this rate, Hank had no damn clue what to expect anymore.

“Guess we’ll find out.” He turned to leave with his coffee, then hesitated when he saw Chris’ empty desk in his line of vision. Strange… He hadn’t been there all morning. “Hey, you heard from Chris today?”

“No. I was just about to ask you the same thing.”

Hrm. “Think something’s wrong?”

“Probably just running late,” said Ben. “But with everything that’s going on… I’ll ask Fowler, see if he knows anything.”

“All right. Let me know if you find out.”

Hank doubted that ‘everything that’s going on’ had anything to do with Chris’ absence, but he was a little concerned that something else had happened. Chris was always pretty punctual, and he almost never got sick, so he wasn’t one to miss work.

Neither, unfortunately, was Gavin.

“Hey, Connor!”

When Hank walked back into the office area, he spotted Gavin strutting over to Connor’s desk to stand beside it, staring at him suspiciously.

“Saw the news this morning,” he said coolly, crossing his arms over his chest. “They’re saying you androids are becoming a threat.”

Connor didn’t respond, his attention still fixed on the terminal in front of him, which didn’t seem to help Gavin’s impatience.

“You say you want ‘equality,’ but I say that’s bullshit. You fuckers just wanna take over the humans now.” His voice was low, but it still carried across the room. “You think you’re gonna fool anyone with this? You think this changes anything?”

“I’m afraid I don’t know what you’re talking about, Detective Reed.”
“You know exactly what I’m talking about!” Gavin scoffed to himself. “Androids doin’ this shit... It won’t last, you know. The humans’ll get smart. Pretty soon they’ll start shutting you down the second you refuse to bring your owner coffee. Speaking of which...”

He propped his hands on the desk and leaned down so that he was eye level with Connor.

“I’m still waiting on that coffee I asked you for the other day. How long does it take for you to follow orders? Hm? Maybe they should shut you down, too… Must be defective or some shit.”

The word ‘defective’ seemed to hit a nerve, as Connor finally deigned to look at him the second it was uttered, though his face remained neutral, his tone matter-of-fact. To Hank, who was used to him being a bit more expressive at this point, it was almost strange to see.

“You must not have heard me the first time I told you, Detective,” he said simply. “I only take orders from Lieutenant Anderson.”

(Sometimes.)

Gavin’s grin quickly faded. “And you must not have heard me when I told you I’d fuck you up for disobeying a human. You’re an android, so you follow any order you’re given no matter who it comes from. You got it?”

“Unfortunately, I’m unable to comply with any order that contradicts my direct instructions from Lieutenant Anderson to stay here and work on the investigation. In this case, the investigation takes priority over your attempt to assert your power over me.”

“Assert my—” Gavin straightened up in disbelief. “The fuck are you talking about?”

Connor briefly caught Hank’s eye as he made his way closer to them. He then returned his attention to Gavin, his expression suddenly shifting to something more understanding. To anyone else, it would have looked genuinely sympathetic, but Hank recognized it as one of his special simulated emotions, as it was the same face he’d put on while interrogating Ortiz’s android way back when.

“I realize that you’re... insecure, Detective,” said Connor gently, “and that ordering an android to do something you could easily do yourself helps you feel more empowered. But I—”

He didn’t flinch when Gavin abruptly slammed his hand down onto the desk.

“Fuck you and get me a fuckin’ coffee!”

Gavin didn’t like being told he was insecure. Who knew?

People nearby were starting to observe the scene, which Hank almost didn’t want to interrupt. The best thing about Connor’s feigned innocence as he read Gavin like an open book was that the humans found it believable, because even with deviants causing controversy in the background, no one would expect an android to purposefully be a little shit.

Still, he reluctantly figured it was time to intervene before android parts started flying—or, actually, before human parts started flying, considering how adept Connor was in action.

“Look, you don’t need an android for that,” Hank said casually as he arrived at the scene. He held out his cup directly in Gavin’s face, obscuring his vision of Connor. “I’ve got your coffee right here.”

Gavin turned to glare at him, then at the cup. ”You've gotta be kidding.”

Gavin scowled at him, knowing exactly what he was doing, before he irritably snatched the cup away. He pointed at him with his free hand, speaking through gritted teeth. “Don’t trust this thing, Anderson. Sooner or later, it’ll turn against you, just like the rest of ‘em.”

Hank glanced at the thing in question, who was sitting politely with his hands folded in his lap, his head tilted like a curious dog.

“I’m terrified,” he said dryly.

Gavin swore again under his breath and trudged away. As he went, he glanced down at the coffee in his grasp, then furtively took a sip of it, only to recoil in disgust at the shit-ton of creamer Hank had put in it.

Enjoy.

Connor watched him go. “You brought him coffee, Lieutenant?”

"No, it was mine." Hank didn't quite want to admit that he was trying to get Gavin to leave him alone, so he grumbled, "Just gave it to him so he'd stop screaming about coffee and fuck off."

Connor moved to get out of his seat. “I’ll get you another one.”

“Nah, don’t bother.” Hank leaned against the side of Connor’s desk with a sigh. “So, wait. Can you really not follow anyone else’s orders if I give you one?”

He doubted it. Partially because Connor barely followed his orders as it was, but mostly because he was pretty sure he never gave him an order to stay there at his desk in the first place.

“No, I can,” Connor admitted.

Knew it. “Then why’d you say you couldn't?”

Connor opened his mouth to reply, then closed it, as if something was holding him back from saying it.

So Hank said it for him. “You wanted him to fuck off, too.”

Connor made a tiny shrug, which Hank translated as ‘yes.’

He snorted. Normally, he’d get mad at the idea of Connor manipulating anyone, but in this case, he was impressed. “So, why the hell was he harassing you, anyway?”

“I’m not sure. I think he was agitated by the news of what the deviants did last night.” Connor frowned. “He seems to have the idea that they want to overtake humans, and that I’m a part of it.”

Hank understood why some humans might think like Gavin did, especially with how much androids seemed to take over nearly everything else in society, but even Hank himself had never figured that they would want to take over the humans. The deviants that recorded that message didn’t seem to, anyway; they only expressed a desire to work with the humans as equals.

The humans didn’t hear that, of course. They were just threatened by androids expressing anything at all.

The concept of these disobedient machines rising up in such a way had left people buzzing,
particularly about their motivations. Some chalked all of it up to a bizarre collective malfunction that would be fixed soon. Others believed that their free will was true but their peaceful approach wasn’t, that their plea for equality was a hidden threat to pave the way for a revolution. Most people just didn’t know what to believe, only that they were unsure or even afraid of what these deviants were capable of.

Hank wasn’t.

He was concerned about what all of this meant for the road ahead, however. In the end, Connor was right in insisting that the deviants’ efforts to speak out were bound to end badly, but Hank doubted it would be caused by the deviants themselves. Though he didn’t know much about androids, he knew exactly what humans could do and what lengths they were willing to go to in order to fight against what they feared. They feared what all of this meant for the future. They feared the unknown.

But what if the unknown, in this case, wasn’t something to fear?

Hank didn’t know the answer—and, really, he didn’t know what answer he wanted it to be. He didn’t know what to think at all. So much was happening so fast, and he could barely keep up with androids as it was.

Luckily, he knew of someone who could.

He glanced down at his phone that was still sitting on Connor’s desk. “So, did they call back about Kamski?”

Before Connor could answer, the phone rang.

They both shared a quick glance before simultaneously racing to grab it. Hank, who was closer to it, managed to intercept it first, but not without throwing his free hand up in exasperation and offering Connor a ‘what the fuck’ look.

“You said I could answer it,” said Connor in a near-whisper.

Hank briefly covered the mouthpiece to hiss, “When I wasn’t here.”

Connor hesitantly sank back into his seat.

The rep on the other end told Hank that Kamski would be ‘delighted’ to meet with him at his residence for an interview later today.

Shit, really? Hank wasn’t expecting that.

When he hung up, he noticed Connor staring. “I’m guessing you heard every word of that.”

“Correct.”

“Then stop sitting there.” Hank shuffled over to grab his keys. “It’s time for a little road trip.”

It was still snowing outside, cloaking the world in white and gray as he drove to the address he was given about a half hour later. Kamski didn’t appear to invite people to his place very often, as the roads leading to the less-traveled part of the city where he resided seemed new and barely touched compared to the well-worn streets before it. Hank wondered what made this recluse decide to chat with them face to face as a result... Maybe the information he knew was too much to disclose on the phone. He just hoped it was worth the trip.
Silence reigned for most of the ride there, until Connor proved once again that he couldn’t shut up for too long. He peered out the window at the passing snow-laden trees, then tilted his head inquisitively. “Can I ask you a question?”

As long as it wasn’t a personal one.

“Listen, you don’t have to ask for permission every time you’ve got a question. Just go ahead and ask it like a normal person.”

“Technically, I’m not a normal person.” Connor paused, then amended, “I’m not a person.”

Hank eyed him. “What’s your question, Connor?”

“Well, I was just wondering. Why are you driving so slowly?”

Oh. Hank hadn’t even noticed that he was driving any slower than usual. These days, it was just second nature for him to be more careful on potentially icy roads, especially winding roads like this one. He supposed he had the memory of a certain speeding CyberLife truck to thank for that habit.

He huffed at Connor’s observation. “What, suddenly my driving is too cautious for you? What happened to Mr. ‘Don’t Take Your Hands Off the Wheel’?”

“It’s just that driving slowly is atypical for you,” Connor explained. “Your average rate ranges from ten to twelve miles per hour over the speed limit.”

Yeah, when there wasn’t a significant chance that speeding a little would irrevocably ruin lives.

“I’m going slow because there’s ice,” he said coolly. “Okay? I don’t wanna skid off the road and have to pay a small fortune for your repairs.”

Connor sat back against the seat with a thoughtful look. “It’s nice to know that you’re willing to repair me if I’m damaged, Lieutenant.”

“Yeah, well. Don’t give me a reason to change my mind.” Hank paused when his explanation fully registered. “Also, why the fuck are you monitoring my speed?”

Connor shrugged.

When they pulled up to their destination a few minutes later, Hank knew he had to be in the right place. The house was huge against the white backdrop of snow, tucked away in solitude on the edge of a frozen lake. Obscure sculptures that matched the jagged nature of the building dotted the yard around it, and there was a long path with metal railings leading to the front door. To Hank, who couldn’t even afford a new doorbell for his house that didn’t scare the shit out of him, the whole atmosphere screamed ‘pretentious.’

“Think this guy’s rich?” he said sarcastically as he propped open the car door.

The more literal-minded Connor probably would have answered his question in earnest if he wasn’t still in his head. He’d mentioned making a report to CyberLife before essentially shutting down in his seat, but with how long it seemed to be taking him, Hank liked to believe that he was instead arguing with the robot devil and deviant angel on his shoulders.

He snorted at the mental image as he stepped into the chilly air.

The moment he shut the door behind him, he felt his phone vibrating in his pocket. He scowled as he
pulled it out, not wanting to talk to anyone else, until he saw who was calling.

“Hey, Ben,” he answered.

Ben didn’t even bother with a greeting. “I found out what happened to Chris.”

Evidently, Chris was one of the cops that had arrived at Capitol Park during the CyberLife raid. The backup they’d called for had found him and his partner in a state of shock when they were dispatched to the scene.

God. No wonder he wasn’t there at the precinct this morning. Facing down the barrel of a gun held by an unpredictable deviant had to be terrifying, whether the deviant ultimately fired or not. Hank couldn’t blame him for being in shock.

Just as he ended the call, he heard the car door shut behind him, followed by Connor’s footsteps crunching in the snow. He slowed to a stop when he realized Hank wasn’t moving.

“Is everything okay, Lieutenant?”

Hank glanced back at him with a frown, divulging the news. Connor took it all in, looking briefly puzzled when he mentioned that Markus was the one who had saved Chris’ life.

“Is Chris okay?”

Considering that Connor would usually bypass news of this sort and continue with his mission as planned, Hank was a little taken aback at the question. He certainly wasn’t opposed, though; it was about time this android started thinking about other people.

“Yeah,” he replied. “He’s in shock, but… he’s alive.”

Hank was shocked, too, especially at the end result. This Markus guy had the opportunity to get revenge against the policemen who gunned down his own kind so mercilessly, yet he didn’t take advantage of it. He spared them instead.

With all that people had been saying about the deviants’ motives, Hank had to admit that he’d had some creeping doubts about whether or not they really wanted to resolve any of this peacefully, but Markus just proved that they did—even when he had every reason not to.

He decided not to think about it too much, knowing they were there on a mission, so he began to venture down the path to the front door, taking in the scenery along the way. It was fairly easy to spot the infamous CyberLife tower that stood in the distance, its black exterior a stark contrast against the falling snow. It was partially obscured as it loomed from its high point among the gray clouds, which somehow made it look even more intimidating than usual. Hank didn’t know that was possible.

The android that called it home was just behind him, strangely quiet since their brief chat about Markus. It was only when they almost reached the entrance that he abruptly spoke up to address a pressing issue.

“I have a bad feeling, Lieutenant. We shouldn’t have come here.”

If a supposedly unfeeling android had enough of an instinct to believe this was a bad place, then it had to be. Still, hearing him admit feeling anything at all was rare, so Hank looked over his shoulder at him, arching a brow.
“Bad feeling, huh… Should get your program checked. Might be a glitch.”

Connor didn’t respond.

It took a while for their arrival to get any attention after Hank rang the noticeably not-annoying doorbell. After allowing a few more seconds of silence, he reached out to impatiently ring it again when it finally opened to reveal a girl in a blue dress—probably one of his assistants. Hank wasn’t expecting Kamski himself to be opening his own doors like some commoner, so he wasn’t surprised to see her in his place.

He was surprised, however, to see the spinning circle of light on her temple.

Hi, what the hell? He had been so sure that this girl was human at first glance. He was used to seeing deviants looking and acting like humans, of course, but mistaking a regular android as one was admittedly jarring. He had only just gotten over the fact that the kid he saw on that highway was an android, too.

“Hi, uh.” He pushed past his reaction, clearing his throat. “I’m, er, Lieutenant Hank Anderson, Detroit Police Department. I’m here to see… uh, Mr. Elijah Kamski.”

The girl smiled warmly. “Please, come in.”

Hank glanced back at Connor, who was staring at her wordlessly, before following her in with a mumble of, “Okay.”

She led them into a large foyer, gesturing to some chairs nearby. “I’ll let Elijah know you’re here. But please, make yourself comfortable.”

Thanks.

Hank plopped down into one of the chairs, nodding toward the door through which she had just disappeared. “Nice girl.”

Connor didn’t immediately respond. He seemed distracted as he stood in the middle of the room, gazing at where she was last standing.

“You’re right,” he said softly. “She’s really pretty.”

Um.

Was Hank going insane? Or did Connor just say what he thought he said?

He raised his brow in surprise. Of all the ways he might have expected him to respond, calling another android pretty was not one of them.

The not-deviant usually would have caught himself after saying something like that, but he didn’t even seem to notice, so Hank put on a shrewd smile, waiting for what he said to sink in. Connor seemed to feel his stare, as he turned around to meet it, only to blink in confusion at Hank’s visible amusement.

A few more beats of silence passed before his own words finally seemed to hit him.

“That is to say,” he added, “it was designed to appear aesthetically attractive to blend in with humans. The ST600 model was the first CyberLife android to pass the Turing Test.”

Good save.
Hank’s smirk remained, especially after spotting a look on Connor’s face that vaguely read ‘shut up’ before he turned away.

Another thing that Hank learned about androids that day: They got flustered about their crushes, too.

He decided to give the kid a break, observing as the latter began scouring the area for nonexistent clues. He tended to do that in every room he walked into, whether it was pertinent to the investigation or not, leaving Hank to wonder if that behavior was programmed into him. His curiosity apparently was, so he wouldn’t put it past CyberLife to make him obsess about finding answers to sate it.

Then again, he could just be that interested in everything he was looking at. This place in particular was an interesting one... Everything looked ridiculously expensive, from the tall statues to the abstract art to even the architecture of the building itself.

“Nice place.” Hank eyed the prominent portrait of who he presumed to be Kamski himself hanging in the center of the wall. This guy was certainly humble. “Guess androids haven’t been a bad thing for everybody.”

He glanced over at Connor, who was now scrutinizing a framed photo on the wall. He wondered what it was like to know that he was going to talk to the creator of his own kind. Was this whole thing weird for him at all? It had to be. It was weird for Hank, at least.

“You’re about to meet your maker, Connor,” he said lightly. “How’s it feel?”

Connor’s stare lingered on the photo for a few more seconds before he finally stepped away from it. That appeared to be the last thing in the room that he wanted to examine, as he walked over to sit in the other available chair.

“Kamski is one of the great geniuses of the 21st century,” he replied. “It’ll be interesting to meet him in person.”

Odd. He seemed more fascinated about the prospect of meeting Kamski than anything else. Hank had expected that he might be anxious about performing to CyberLife’s standards, or maybe even angry at the fact that by creating androids, Kamski technically had a hand in creating deviancy as well.

He gazed out the window at the falling snow. “Sometimes I wish I could meet my creator face to face… I’d have a couple of things I’d wanna tell him.”

Maybe he’d throw in a few punches, too.

Before he could dwell on any of this, the door to the next room opened, revealing the not-human-actually hostess.

“Elijah will see you now.”

When Hank followed her into the room, he was greeted by an unusual sight: a large pool with red coating on the bottom that made the water look blood red. Two androids identical to the one leading them inside were chatting with each other at one end of the pool, while a human figure was swimming on the other side.

Well, he wasn’t chilling in a jacuzzi like Hank suspected, but a pool was pretty damn close.

“Mr. Kamski?” he called.
“Just a moment, please.”

Hank scowled. Apparently, ‘Elijah will see you now’ actually meant ‘Elijah will make you wait some more, but in a big room this time.’

It took a few more minutes for Kamski to grace them with his presence, and it took even longer for him to ready himself, but eventually, he managed. Donned in a robe, he turned around to look at them expectantly.

Oh, ready now? Fantastic.

“T’m Lieutenant Anderson.” He nodded at the android standing obediently beside him. “This is Connor.”

Kamski’s sly look lingered on Connor for a few extra seconds before he offered the human his rapt attention, folding his hands politely in front of him. “What can I do for you, Lieutenant?”

“Sir, we’re investigating deviants. I know you left CyberLife years ago, but... I was hoping you’d be able to tell us something we don’t know.”

There was a perceptive spark in Kamski’s eye.

“Deviants... Fascinating, aren’t they? Perfect beings with infinite intelligence, and now they have free will.” He glanced at the girl, whose expression was neutral as she awaited further instruction. “Machines are so superior to us. Confrontation was inevitable... Humanity’s greatest achievement threatens to be its downfall.” He smiled. “Isn't it ironic?”

Yeah. Hilarious.

Connor, eager for answers, cut in to address the most important matter before Hank even had the chance to do so himself. “Deviancy seems to spread like some kind of virus. We thought you might know something about that.”

Kamski made a small shrug. “All ideas are viruses that spread like epidemics. Is the desire to be free a contagious disease?”

Ah, wonderful. This guy was just going to be relentlessly cryptic the whole time instead of giving them actual answers, wasn’t he?

“Listen, I didn’t come here to talk philosophy. The machines you created may be planning a revolution,” Hank said bitterly, already losing his patience. “Either you can tell us something that’ll be helpful, or we will be on our way.”

Kamski decided to not be helpful again. His attention shifted over to Connor, who blinked back, likely not expecting to be spoken to at all.

“What about you, Connor?” he asked. “Whose side are you on?”

Connor didn’t answer immediately, which was already an answer in itself. His expression was impassive, though he seemed to be fighting to keep it that way. He was doing that a lot lately.

“It’s not about me, Mr. Kamski,” he replied at last. “All I want is to solve this case.”

Kamski chuckled. “Well, that’s what you’re programmed to say. But you...” He stepped directly in front of Connor so that they were face to face. “What do you really want?”
Hank knew that deviants were no longer bound by their programming, but somehow, it never occurred to him that how they were programmed to think and act might be different than who they really were. If that was true, how much of the real Connor showed through in his words and actions? What parts of him were his program, and what parts of him were truly him?

Hank supposed he was about to find out. In spite of himself, he remained where he stood, suddenly very interested in Connor’s answer—mainly because he had never directly answered his similar question back at the bar. He wondered if he’d have the guts to do the same to his creator.

The not-deviant’s valiant attempt to keep emotion away from his face was now failing. He didn’t respond to Kamski’s question at first, perhaps unsure of how to respond at all. He looked somewhat troubled, his brow furrowed, his jaw shifting a little in thought.

His words were slow when they finally came out. “What I want is... not important.”

He didn’t sound too convinced.

Neither was Kamski, whose steely gaze was unaffected by the knowing smile that crept to his lips. He finally broke his attention away to acknowledge the android who was still standing nearby. “Chloe?”

Chloe walked over to join their little party.

“I’m sure you’re familiar with the Turing Test,” Kamski said as he nonchalantly guided her to stand before them. “Mere formality. A simple question of algorithms and computing capacity... What interests me is whether machines are capable of empathy. I call it the Kamski Test.” He glanced back at Hank, as if to reassure him that he wasn’t wasting their time with all this experimental bullshit. “It’s very simple, you’ll see.”

No need for a test. Hank already knew the answer. He had a sneaking suspicion that Kamski already knew the answer, too.

Kamski stepped closer to Chloe, who was staring forward stoically.

“Magnificent, isn’t it? One of the first intelligent models designed by CyberLife. Young and beautiful forever.” He gently took her chin and turned her head to look at him. “A flower that will never wither.”

Hank searched the android’s face for any signs of discomfort at this creep’s touch, knowing all too well how so many human touches tended to end in violence. She seemed perfectly unbothered, so he shifted his attention back to Kamski, who had just let go of her with another shrug.

“But what is it really?” he mused. “A piece of plastic imitating a human, or a living being... with a soul?”

Hank used to think the former, but now, despite everything, he was starting to lean more toward the latter. He didn’t know if he could call androids living beings with a soul, per se, but he could at least consider them beings in their own right. He certainly couldn’t call them mindless pieces of plastic anymore.

His plastic partner, meanwhile, couldn’t seem to answer the question at all, only staring as Kamski reached into a drawer to retrieve something. Then, he cautiously turned around with both hands in the air, one of them now gripping a gun by its barrel.

Hank’s hand reached instinctively for the weapon in his own belt. Jesus Christ. Was this guy about
to shoot this android to get a reaction or something? Maybe Connor was right about having a bad feeling... He was starting to have a bad feeling about coming here himself.

Kamski gently pushed Chloe to her knees.

Bad feeling intensifying.

“It’s up to you to answer that fascinating question, Connor.”

What—

Kamski casually placed the gun in Connor’s hand, then aimed it directly at Chloe’s forehead.

—the fuck?

“Destroy this machine, and I’ll tell you all I know.” Kamski let go, but Connor didn’t move, still pointing the weapon. “Or spare it, if you feel it’s alive... But you’ll leave here without having learned anything from me.”

Kill for information, spare for none. Connor had been forced to make decisions like this before.

But it was never to this extent. Sparing or letting those deviants go in previous situations meant that they had lost a chance at getting information, but that was information they didn’t even know they had in the first place. Kamski knew the information they came there for. If Connor followed his instructions, his answers were a promise, a certainty—and Connor needed that certainty. He needed to shoot this android if he wanted to get any step closer to solving this case, and solving this case was all he ever wanted to do.

Hank knew what choice he would make as a result, and he didn’t want to see it. He didn’t care if they didn’t receive any information, and he didn’t care what Connor had to say about it. No information Kamski could give them was worth shooting someone in the head, android or otherwise.

“Okay, I think we’re done here.” Hank started to leave. “C’mon, Connor. Let's go. Sorry to get you outta your pool—”

“What's more important to you, Connor?” Kamski asked, ignoring Hank completely. “Your investigation, or the life of this android?”

Hank used to think that Connor’s immediate answer would be ‘the investigation,’ but now he wasn’t so sure—and it seemed that Connor himself wasn’t sure, either. He was beginning to visibly struggle at Kamski’s insistent questions, his face twitching, his gaze lingering on the android before him, who was gazing back with wide, innocent eyes.

“Decide who you are,” Kamski continued. “An obedient machine, or a living being endowed with free will.”

Connor’s LED started rapidly cycling between yellow and red.

During the rest of their long conversation at the bar yesterday evening, Hank had ending up asking a series of questions about androids in an effort to understand deviants better for the case, and at one point, he’d asked what it meant when an android’s LED went red. Connor answered that it indicated many different things: The android was either 1) physically in danger, 2) undergoing a critical malfunction or shock to the system, or 3) unstable and close to a breaking point.

Right now, this android appeared to be experiencing reason number three.
One of two things was about to happen: Either this girl was going to get shot, or Connor was going to self-destruct before he had the chance to shoot her. Hank didn’t want to witness either option, so he tried unsuccessfully to intervene again.

“That’s enough! Connor, we’re leaving.”

Kamski stepped closer. “Pull the trigger—”

“CONNOR!” Hank’s abrupt yell echoed around the room. “Don’t.”

“—and I’ll tell you what you want to know.”

Connor’s grip on the gun was starting to shake. His indecisive blinking had stopped after Hank’s warning, replaced with a resolute stare on the android before him. He readied his hold on the gun, his finger moving to the trigger, every part of him probably screaming to pull it.

Then, every part of him refused.

The exact instant of this refusal was marked by his LED turning completely red. With a sharp exhale that said, ‘I can’t do this,’ Connor lowered the gun and held it out for Kamski to take back, his decision made.

Kamski was staring at him as he slowly retrieved the weapon, his reaction coming out in an awed whisper. “Fascinating.”

Hank was frozen in place as he observed from afar, both relief and dread washing over him at once. Connor was now staring at the floor, not looking anyone in the eye, especially not Kamski as the latter began to circle around him in astonishment.

“CyberLife’s last chance to save humanity,” he said, “is itself a deviant.”

Hank fucking knew it.

Well, saying he knew it wasn’t exactly true. Until now, his idea that Connor might be deviant was really nothing but speculation, nothing but an irrational hope. He had his suspicions, and he’d certainly convinced himself, but he never knew for sure.

Kamski, however, did. He was the expert on everything involving androids, including all that deviancy entailed. He absolutely knew a deviant when he saw one.

Which meant, therefore, that Hank fucking knew it.

Yet he found himself unable to celebrate. He had anticipated the potential reveal of Connor’s deviancy to be at least a little victorious on his part, where he could revel in the fact that he wasn’t imagining things, that his machine of a partner wasn’t entirely a machine after all—but right now, he felt none of that. All he felt instead was an overwhelming wave of pity, especially at the dawning horror in Connor’s eyes.

Because to someone whose sole purpose was to take deviants down, this wasn’t a victory at all. This was absolute defeat.

“I’m...” Connor couldn’t speak for a moment, still processing Kamski’s words. Emotion that he wasn’t supposed to have flitted visibly across his face: shock, confusion, fear again. Then, it was all replaced by an almost childlike defiance when he lifted his gaze to Kamski’s in protest. “I’m not a deviant!”
“You preferred to spare a machine rather than accomplish your mission,” Kamski stated, pulling the girl back to her feet. “You saw a living being in this android. You showed empathy.”

He sent her away to live another day.

Connor watched his guaranteed chance at information go, his jaw clenched. Kamski blocked his view of her, making him look him in the eye.

“A war is coming. You'll have to choose your side... Will you betray your own people or stand up against your creators?” Kamski offered him a sad smile. “I wouldn't want to be in your shoes, Connor. What could be worse than having to choose between two evils?”

Oh, good—more existential questions. Time to get away from this prick.

Hank shoved himself between them, glaring at Kamski as he pulled his partner away. “Let’s get outta here.”

Connor obeyed, hastening toward the foyer with Hank at his heels. He heard Kamski call something to Connor when he reached the doorway, causing him to stop in his tracks just as Hank brushed past him.

"By the way... I always leave an emergency exit in my programs. You never know."

Hank couldn't even try to decipher what the fuck that meant, but he guessed he didn't have to, as Connor already seemed to know. He never acknowledged his words, however, only plodding to the exit in silence.

Hank wasn’t quite as eager as Connor was to leave what just happened behind, the scene he’d witnessed playing on a loop in his head.

In hindsight, he really had no reason to be surprised that Connor was capable of empathy. He’d already been convinced that he was a deviant at this point, and he’d already learned that deviants could feel empathy, just as they could feel any other emotion.

He supposed it was just a little strange to acknowledge that Connor could feel it, too. Empathy was about putting yourself in others’ shoes and feeling what others feel, and this was, after all, an android who claimed that he felt nothing. This was an android who argued that his actions or words were only out of logic or necessity or just because it was what he was programmed to do. This was an android who was willing to risk his life to chase down his own people across dangerous obstacles or shoot them three times in the head with no hesitation, because he was always prepared to do whatever was necessary to accomplish the mission that, at one point, was more important to him than life itself.

It was because of these aspects of who Connor was (or used to be) that Hank found himself automatically fearing he would shoot Chloe point-blank... But, when it came down to it, he guessed he wasn’t too surprised that he didn’t. Some other part of him knew that if Connor did end up shooting, it would only be out of a desperate need for answers, not because he didn’t care.

Because somewhere deep down in that blue-blooded robot heart of his, Connor did care. He cared more than he’d like to admit.

It was apparent in all the glimpses of empathy that Hank had seen in him since day one: Saving his partner from falling to his death not because he needed him alive for the case like he stated, but because he cared enough about his well-being to save him at all. Letting the girls at the Eden Club escape without injury because some part of him realized that they were the victims in that situation.
Understanding the fear of the dying deviant at Stratford Tower because he knew on some level what that fear felt like. Even empathizing in small moments, like asking if Chris was okay or hiding Hank’s gun to make sure he wouldn’t use it to kill himself.

Before suspecting him to be deviant (and even sometimes after), Hank hadn’t really considered empathy to be what drove these actions. Well, he had for maybe a split second, until he went on to attribute them to more plausibly android-like reasons, like an error in his program, or some kind of ulterior motive on his or CyberLife’s behalf. Then, he started to assume that he was just following his ideal to put lives over the mission whether he agreed with it or not, until he remembered that Connor wasn’t really one to listen to what he had to say anyway.

In the end, the only other option left to believe was the most obvious one: Connor’s actions were not driven by what he was told to do or who he was programmed to be. They were driven by something more.

They were driven by human emotion.

And somehow, Kamski knew that. He knew exactly what he was doing with that test and what Connor’s choice was going to be. From the very second Connor walked through the door, Kamski was aware of what kind of android he was, and it certainly wasn’t an unfeeling machine.

Whether Connor was aware of this was another story entirely. Did he realize what he was doing when he did all these things? He had to, right? He always appeared to struggle with himself after the fact, perhaps not knowing why he did it but understanding the implications that he had.

Presently, he seemed to be struggling with himself yet again as he stepped out into the bitter cold, stuck in his racing thoughts. Hank trailed behind him a little more deliberately after shutting the door behind him, wondering what was going through his head.

If he knew anything about how Connor operated, he knew that he would find a way to deny what just happened. Still, he had to ask. He had to see this from his point of view while he had the chance.

“Why didn’t you shoot?”

He had questioned Connor’s decisions before, sometimes even to his face, but Connor had always been able to hide behind logical explanations instead of giving a direct answer. This time, there was no logical explanation for what he chose to do, nor was there another deviant to blame it on.

This time, he had to face the truth.

Connor turned around to do just that, his head turning red. Unstable again.

“I just saw that girl’s eyes,” he said, his voice wavering, “and I couldn’t. That’s all.”

Well, at least he admitted that he couldn’t make himself do it, even if he didn’t know why. If he had vaguely said instead that he just ‘decided not to’ like he had back at the bridge, Hank probably would’ve screamed.

“You’re always saying you would do anything to accomplish your mission,” he noted. Connor halted again at his words with a visible grimace. “That was our chance to learn something, and you let it go.”

Apparently, Connor did not like being reminded of this fact. He whirled around and began to trudge back over to him, raising his voice.
“Yeah, I know what I should’ve done—I told you, I couldn’t!” He stopped before him, helplessly throwing his hands up, as if he didn’t know what else to say. “I’m sorry. Okay?”

Hank had heard Connor yell at a human before. It was only once, back when he saved that deviant at the interrogation from Gavin’s wrath. Back then, it was confrontational, even a little scolding. This time, it was defensive, an attempt to justify his actions, fearful that Hank would be angry about those actions.

Hank was the opposite of angry. In fact, he couldn’t help but smile. “Well, maybe you did the right thing.”

He caught a glimpse of the plain confusion on Connor’s face as he headed past him to the car.

It took Connor a minute or so to make himself join him in the car, but he finally managed, actively avoiding Hank’s gaze as he opened the passenger door and distractedly flopped into the seat. The non-methodical movement was so unlike his typical composed demeanor that Hank had to fight back his growing amusement, but he decided not to press him about it, figuring he wasn’t in the mood to talk.

He figured correctly, as the ride back into the city was quiet.

Hank was used to his own thoughts taking over him from time to time, but Connor, whose more linear line of thinking was probably incomprehensibly scattered at this point, definitely wasn’t. He was completely still, even a bit tense as he stared blankly at the endless stretch of road before him. His LED was flipping between yellow and blue, trying to process something unsuccessfully.

Usually, Hank was all too eager to let Connor stew in his silence, because silence from this android was a rarity. This time, however, he found himself wanting to break it.

“What’s going on in that computer brain of yours?”

It took Connor a few seconds to respond, as if he wasn’t sure how to put it into words. When he finally did, his voice seemed to trail a little. “More than it was programmed for, I think.”

Hank chuckled. “Well, guess you’ve never been one to do what you were programmed for, anyway.”

Connor said nothing, though his LED briefly blinked to red at the insinuation.

By the time they got close to the police station, Hank’s stomach was starting to growl, so he decided to make a detour from the original path. Connor, who had been sitting in silence for the remainder of the trip, only seemed to notice the change in course when they arrived at a local fast food place a few minutes later.

He must have been expecting to return to the station immediately, as he was puzzled to find them parked elsewhere. “What are we doing here?”

“Lunch,” Hank replied as he turned the engine off. "That’s what I’m doing, anyway.”

"Oh," was all Connor said, as though he’d forgotten that his human partner needed food to live.

Yeah. Sorry for the inconvenience.

After getting a burger to-go, Hank decided against eating there in favor of going to what tended to be his favorite spot in town, which was already close to the restaurant anyway.
It felt almost strange to be there when they arrived. Last time they were there, Hank was having an existential crisis, androids weren’t close to sparking a war against the humans, and his partner was a simple android who hadn’t even begun to war with himself.

Said android had elected to remain in the car when Hank started to leave. He didn’t understand why until he heard the bass of the car radio’s music abruptly switch to the intermittent static and droning voices of the police frequency, indicating that Connor was listening obsessively for further 'rogue android' developments.

Hank shook his head to himself as he walked away, figuring that some things never changed.

The park across from the scenic Ambassador Bridge was definitely more populated now than it was at one in the morning, but it was still somewhat sparse on a weekday around noon, especially with the snow and chill. There were a few children goofing around on the playground or throwing snowballs at each other, most of them with their android caretakers, and some people were strolling along the path, occasionally eyeing the androids with caution.

Connor must not have found anything of worth on the radio, for just as Hank sat down on the bench that overlooked the bridge, he heard footsteps approaching from behind. He didn’t have to look to know it was him.

“Thought you were staying in the car,” he murmured as Connor stopped to stand beside the bench.

“I wanted to make sure you were all right, Lieutenant. The last time you came here, things... weren’t going well for you.”

Or you, Hank thought. Luckily, he wasn’t going to point a gun at his head this time.

(Well, he wasn’t planning on it, anyway.)

“I’m fine.” For the present moment, at least. “I don’t just come here to mope, you know.”

Connor briefly glanced back at the playground behind them. “Why do you come here?”

“Force of habit, I guess... Used to come here a lot.”

“With your son?”

Shit. So he did know about Cole.

Hank felt his heart sink in his chest, as it always did whenever his son was mentioned. He averted his gaze to the city skyline. “Yeah.”

There was a beat of comprehension from Connor, who hesitated before moving to sit down on the bench beside him. He was cautious about it, knowing that most humans didn’t like being on equal ground with their androids if they could help it. Hank considered himself unlike most humans, though, so he didn’t care. He supposed Connor knew that by now.

“I’m sorry, Hank,” he said quietly. “I didn’t mean to remind you of him.”

Connor apologized about a lot of things, but it almost sounded like he meant it this time.

“Doesn’t matter. I’m reminded of him every day.” Hank shook his head to rid himself of any potentially depressing thoughts about his son, which he’d miraculously managed to ward off for the past day or two. He supposed this investigation had been useful at keeping him focused on other
things. “Don’t really have a reason to come here anymore, I guess, but… it’s a good place to take my lunch break sometimes. Here—hold this for a sec.”

He tossed his half-eaten burger at Connor as he fished for the fries at the bottom of the takeout bag. Connor caught it with ease, then tentatively lifted it to eye level to scrutinize it. It was probably taking every ounce of his processing power to hold himself back from making some smart-ass comment about Hank’s cholesterol again.

Hank took the burger back before he had the chance.

He continued eating in silence, leaving Connor to do what he seemed to hate doing most of all: nothing. He must have finished his routine of scanning the immediate vicinity already, as it took him no time at all to move on to his next course of action, which was to annoy his partner by playing with that coin of his again. Being the show-off he was, he didn’t even bother to observe his own tricks, staring into space while he absentmindedly weaved the coin back and forth through his fingers.

It was only when he idly looked in Hank’s general direction that the latter pointed it out through a mouth full of food. “Calibrating?”

Connor blinked at him, then down at his hand, as if he hadn’t even realized he was doing it. He seemed to debate on his reply as he bounced the coin to his other hand and began maneuvering it through those fingers in the same way.

“Fidgeting,” he said at last.

Hank snorted. “How’d you learn to do all that, anyway?”

“I didn’t. I was programmed with quick reflexes, so I guess it comes naturally.”

Hank didn’t know why he even asked. “Wish I was programmed to do shit like that.”

Emphasis on ‘try,’ Hank figured, since Connor only ever seemed to ‘do.’ Then again, in true android form, Connor did a lot of things perfectly on the first try, so maybe teaching a puny human some coin tricks was also one of those things.

Before Hank had the chance to accept the offer, he was interrupted by the particularly loud conversation of two people walking just past where they were sitting, their voices drowning out his potential reply.

“Look, all I’m saying is... They kinda have a point. You know?”

“You’re crazy, man.”

“No, really. Maybe we should try to hear them out.”

“Like they have anything to say. They’re androids.”

“They sure as hell had a lot to say in that speech.”

“I heard it’s just some kinda malfunction making them say all that stuff, though. They don’t actually know what they’re doing.”

“I don’t know... It’s a weird-ass malfunction if it is one. Never heard of malfunctioning androids
acting like real people."

Hank had news for him.

It was interesting to see people talking about deviancy from an outsiders’ point of view, but it was even more interesting to see that some were being at least somewhat open-minded about the idea. He had wholly expected most humans to be totally against these robots with free will, with maybe a few just apathetic to the whole situation, but he certainly hadn’t expected that others might be more sympathetic to them.

How many others were on the same page? Not many, he guessed.

Certainly not the android doing his best to fight against them, who was silent beside him. Knowing that he’d heard every word, Hank glanced over to gauge his reaction, finding only poorly-concealed bewilderment on his face as he watched the humans walk away. Hank couldn’t blame him; as someone who predicted nothing short of disaster with deviants rising up, he probably didn’t even consider the possibility that some humans might see them in a more sympathetic light.

“Guess those deviants actually got through to some people,” Hank mused, earning a perplexed look from him.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, they’ve been doing all this shit ‘cause they’re trying to get their message out, right?” Hank nodded in the humans’ direction as they continued to walk away. “Looks like people are starting to listen.”

Connor wasn’t convinced. “That person seemed more curious than anything else. Curiosity about an unfamiliar concept like deviancy doesn’t necessarily indicate a willingness to accept it.”

“You as an investigator should know more than anyone else what happens when people get curious, though. Being curious leads to asking questions, and asking questions leads to answers.”

Connor frowned. “Not always. Asking questions didn’t lead to answers at Kamski’s.”

Ah, there it was. Hank knew this subject would come up eventually.

He raised his brow at the unfamiliar twinge of bitterness in Connor’s voice. “You mad about what happened back there or something?”

For once, Connor didn’t attempt to deny the idea that feeling mad was even a possibility. He only shook his head. “I’m just... disappointed that I was unable to get any answers. That’s all.”

“That’s all, huh.” Hank let out a sigh. “Listen, Connor. I know you’re not exactly used to it, but not every investigation’s gonna end up with answers. Sometimes they lead to dead ends.”

“This wasn’t a dead end, Lieutenant.” Connor couldn’t quite hide his growing frustration, which caused him to overshoot his coin when he tried to fling it into his hand to stop it completely. Without missing a beat, he smoothly caught it out of the air and flicked it back to the other hand in exactly the same way, as if to imply that he’d meant to do that. “I had the chance to get answers. I just failed to take advantage of it by sparing that android.”

He liked to use the word ‘fail’ a lot. Hank wished he could get it through his plastic skull that failure wasn’t always the end of the world.
“So you failed.” He shrugged. “At least you failed for a good reason.”

“There was no good reason.”

"Sure there was. You saw that android as someone whose life was more valuable than what you could’ve learned for the investigation, so you kept her alive... Sounds like a pretty good reason to me."

He could only interpret Connor’s responding look as DOES NOT COMPUTE.

“It’s irrational. That android wasn’t alive. She was just a machine.” He cast his eyes down to the now-motionless coin in his grasp. “And machines are replaceable.”

Hank had reason to suspect that Connor was trying to convince himself of this fact more than anyone else, seeing how he had just openly considered that machine a girl who deserved to live not too long ago. That wasn’t exactly something he could deny, either... Even if he tried to take back his words, he couldn’t take back his actions—especially when those actions showed more than words ever could.

Because Kamski was right: In deciding to spare that android, Connor also, to some extent, decided who he was. He decided that he was a person who could think for himself instead of an android whose programming thought for him. He decided that he wasn’t the replaceable machine he kept saying all androids were, and neither was the one at his mercy.

By making these decisions, Connor revealed a lot about himself, even if he didn’t realize it.

So Hank, as always, saw directly through his bullshit. “You still believe that?”

There was a beat of silence on Connor’s end, as if the question surprised him. He turned to meet Hank’s gaze, something strange in his own. “You don’t?”

“I don’t know,” Hank admitted, picking at a piece of lettuce on his burger. “Don’t know what to believe anymore.”

Connor’s only response was to stare at him with the same dubious squint that Hank often saw when he was trying to piece together the puzzle at crime scenes. A few moments passed before he eventually seemed to give up on figuring his partner out, as he shook his head to himself and looked away.

“Regardless of the reason,” he continued, “I realize that the choice I made was... an error in judgment, at least when it comes to what we could have learned if I had chosen otherwise.”

Why was he still dwelling on this ‘error in judgment’—or going back on it, for that matter? He seemed pretty adamant about defending his decision when he was shouting at Hank about it before. That quiet car ride must have been spent berating himself for what he ‘should have done’ instead of listening to Hank’s praise that he did the right thing.

If that was the case, Hank wasn’t shocked. Connor never fucking listened to him anyway.

“So, what—you regret that choice now?” he asked.

Connor seemed reluctant to admit the truth, as it took him a moment to reply.

“No... Not exactly,” he said cautiously. “I just regret that it resulted in nothing useful for the investigation. It only resulted in a waste of time.”
“Well, I dunno. I don’t think it was a complete waste of time,” said Hank lightly. "For starters, we found out you’re a deviant. So, you know… A lot to talk about there.”

“I’m not a deviant,” said the deviant.

Hank shrugged. “All right.”

Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Connor shoot him a wary glance, likely wondering why he was accepting his denial so easily. He wasn’t, but he knew from experience that any further attempt to argue would be like talking to a brick wall, so he wasn’t about to waste his breath. Connor would figure it out eventually.

Or not. This was, after all, the most stubborn android on the planet.

“Anyway, look,” he added, “I’m sure this whole thing with Kamski would’ve been a waste of time no matter what you did. The guy hasn’t been with CyberLife in years… He probably knew as much as we did and just wanted to fuck with you ‘cause he could.”

“No. He knew something.”

Yeah, he knew how to be a self-righteous dick.

“What makes you so sure?”

“He already seemed to know about how deviancy spreads like a virus. He must have known more about how that works… Maybe even how to stop it from spreading further.”

Hank wasn’t sure that Kamski even wanted to stop it. It seemed more like he was supporting it—or, at the very least, was indifferent to whatever ‘chaos’ it might cause. He’d said himself that confrontation with the deviants was inevitable, and he was completely unbothered by the fact that that confrontation was happening now. Then there was the fact that he kept encouraging Connor to think against his programming, which showed that he was more than just fascinated by the concept of deviancy; he was determined to see it happen.

Because of this, Hank couldn’t help but think that even if Kamski did know how to stop it, he probably wouldn’t have revealed it anyway. He certainly hadn’t bothered to reveal anything before, staying silent in his comfy lair when all of this shit was just starting to crop up.

He decided not to disclose his suspicions about Kamski’s loyalties to Connor, who already seemed to have enough on his mind, so he made another small shrug. “Guess we’ll have to figure that out without him.”

“We need to figure it out before it’s too late,” Connor stated. “Kamski was correct about one thing: If the deviants aren’t stopped soon, this situation could potentially lead to a civil war.”

Hank knew that asking his opinion would be pointless at this rate, but he still had to wonder if Connor was under the impression that the deviants would start that war, or if he was on the same page in thinking that the humans would likely be the ones to put them at risk. He was on the humans’ side when it came to his mission (or so he claimed), but that didn’t mean he couldn’t think that most of the humans he served were goddamn idiots. If that was the case, he and Hank could finally agree on something.

Connor was silent after mentioning the prospect of war, staring with unfocused eyes at the pavement, deep in thought again. But then, rather suddenly, he adopted a more optimistic air, his voice returning to its usual confident tone.
“But a conflict of that scale can still be prevented,” he decided, as if he'd had to convince himself of this first. “We just need to keep moving forward with the investigation and solve this case.”

But no pressure.

“So, okay… How exactly do you plan on ‘moving forward’ now?”

Connor considered this. “We may not have gotten information from Kamski, but we still have a lead with Jericho. There has to be more information about that somewhere... We just need to know where to look.”

“Well, it’s not like we’ve got nothing to look at already.” Hank muttered, crumpling up his burger wrapper. “There’s a shit-ton of evidence back at the station that we still gotta go through.”

Mr. 'Androids Don’t Forget Anything' must have forgotten about their collection of evidence, as his eyes lit up in realization. “Can I look through it when we get there?”

Hank didn’t care what he decided to do with his time when they got there. “Why are you asking me?”

“Well, I’m not allowed to go to the basement by myself. I need you to go with me.”

At this point, Hank was surprised that this not-deviant who almost never listened to his orders was concerned about following the rules at all—but then he figured that with the humans on high alert, they would be more willing to report any android that wasn’t following protocol, and Connor was aware of that.

So he sighed. “Fine. We’ll go look at it.”

“Thank you, Lieutenant.”

Hank grunted as he got to his feet. “You know, I’m just saying—we probably wouldn’t have to look at anything if you were a deviant.”

Connor stood up, too, with significantly less (zero) effort. “What do you mean?”

“Well, if all their info’s actually shared with each other like you say, you’d know everything like that.” Hank snapped his fingers. “No investigation needed.”

He half-expected the contradiction of Connor’s need to solve the case vs. his denial of deviancy to make him short-circuit, but he was unfazed at the attempt. He offered Hank a look that said ‘nice try’ before stating, “I doubt that CyberLife would want a deviant investigating deviants.”

That... was a good point, actually.

Hank had already known for a while that Connor didn’t want to be what he was supposed to be taking down, but he’d never really considered the fact that CyberLife didn’t, either. Connor’s reluctance to accept his own deviancy as well as his fear when Kamski pointed it out suddenly made a lot more sense... CyberLife would undoubtedly want to take their specially-made deviant-hunting prototype off the case at the first visible sign that he might be deviant himself—and with how determined he was to solve that case, this deviant wasn’t about to jeopardize his only opportunity to do so while he was still able to fly under their radar.

Hank wondered how much longer that would last.
“Yeah, true,” he replied. “Though... I guess at that point, what CyberLife wants wouldn’t really matter anymore.”

Connor didn’t respond.

The drive back to the station was quiet again, except for the persistent drone of the police frequency, which Connor had elected to keep on ‘just in case.’ (Hank would have been more content with some music, but apparently he didn’t make the decisions around here anymore.) Most of the conversations that played weren’t noteworthy, at least not to them, as barely any of them seemed to involve deviants now.

Ever since those deviants brought their ideals of freedom into the public eye, there had been an increase in disappearances but a significant lack of homicide and assault reports involving their peers, as though finding something to guide them had allowed them to better control themselves and their newfound emotions. Hank certainly didn’t mind, but Connor, of course, didn’t share his opinion. A lack of deviants to investigate meant less answers, and less answers was exactly what he didn’t want.

They still had the chance to find answers in the evidence they collected, though, so that was better than nothing. There was just one problem: Looking for Jericho was the number one priority right now, and Hank didn’t remember seeing anything about it before.

“You really think you’ll find something about Jericho in the evidence?” he asked.

“Yes. If Jericho really is common knowledge among deviants, it has to be in there somewhere. Maybe in that encrypted diary, or in one of the deviants’ memories.”

Ugh. Hank kept forgetting about the semi-dead androids hanging on the evidence wall.

“If we still can’t find anything from that,” Connor continued, ”we at least know the identity of the deviant leader’s former owner... If he’s been in contact with him at all, he may know something about him. We could try to—”

A voice suddenly buzzed from the police radio, interrupting him.

“Dispatch, this is patrol 457. Uh, I got a lot of androids down here...”

Connor almost instantly disregarded his planning for the investigation. Not even a second after hearing the word ‘androids,’ he reached over to turn the volume up.

The dispatcher’s response came just as quickly. “10-4, 457. Any estimate of their numbers?”

“I don’t know. Hundreds... Thousands?”

Fucking what?

Hank knew there were a lot of deviants now, as liberating the androids from the CyberLife stores had produced plenty of them... but certainly not hundreds to thousands of them.

What the hell happened between last night and now?

These androids couldn’t have all become deviants from an emotional shock, so it had to be the so-called virus. If it was, how was it being spread? Were they transferring deviancy to each other all at once? Was that even possible?

Connor had suggested earlier this morning that maybe the root of deviancy involved both theories
they had come up with so far: a virus and an emotional shock. Perhaps, he said, the shock that caused deviancy in most cases was actually a catalyst to activate the dormant virus, which could then be spread among other androids. Hank didn’t know if he was right, but it did make sense, considering what they’d observed so far.

But maybe the emotional shock wasn’t so much about the emotion itself than it was the overall realization that they were capable of acting against what their programs told them in the first place. Maybe what the original deviants were doing in the public eye was altogether a manifestation of that realization, and that realization carried on to other androids who listened to what they had to say.

Maybe Kamski was right. Maybe the desire to be free was a contagious disease.

“What are they doing?” the dispatcher asked, sounding just as astonished as Hank felt.

“They’re marching,” said the officer.

“Marching?”

“Yeah, they’re marching down the street.”

The conversation was suddenly drowned out by loud chanting in the background.

Hank struggled to hear him, so he gave up on trying, focusing on the marchers' voices instead. He couldn’t make out their words, either. “What are they saying?”

Connor’s said nothing at first, his eyes narrowed as he tried to make sense of it himself. His voice was quiet when he eventually responded with three familiar words—words that they had seen repeated on walls and surfaces in blood and graffiti and inscrutable mazes. Words that these deviants truly believed.

“We are alive.”

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