Home for the Holidays

by DZiegler

The Avant Controller app flashed red: ***CONNECTION FAILED. DEVICE NOT FOUND.***

"No no no no—" Doug jabbed the refresh icon again, laptop balanced on his thigh, fingers shaking. The Bluetooth scan cycled. Nothing. WiFi scan. Nothing. The stylized Avant Robotics logo pulsed cheerfully through its loading animation, that smug little infinity symbol spinning and spinning like it had all the time in the world. Like it was mocking him.

Beside him on his mother's guest bed, Heather continued to malfunction.

She was frozen mid-pose, exactly where she'd locked up nearly four minutes ago. Lying on her back, head tilted against the pillow, dark hair fanned across the white cotton in a way that made her look like a magazine spread gone horribly wrong. Her sheer black bra, never meant to conceal anything, elegantly framed her springy, gel-soft B-cups, nipples still visibly stiff from the arousal subroutines that had been running before everything went sideways. Her left hand still gripped the waistband of her matching lace thong, tugging it aside to expose her plastic sex. Her right hand remained buried between her spread thighs, two fingers deep in herself, frozen mid-stroke.

Black smoke curled lazily from her parted lips, drifting toward the ceiling. Her eyes had crossed inward, pupils slightly misaligned, staring at nothing.

From her left ear, a tiny orange spark leapt and died. Then another.

"Heather," he hissed, slapping at the refresh button again. "Heather, can you hear me?"

Nothing. She'd been moaning his name just minutes ago, working herself up exactly like he'd asked, that pretty synthetic pussy getting slick for him. And then that *sound*. That horrible wet mechanical ***CRACK-SPLURCH*** from somewhere deep inside her, followed by electrical snapping like bacon in a hot pan, and she'd just... stopped.

The smell hit him properly now: burnt electronics and melted plastic mixed with something sweeter, almost chemical. Her synthetic lubricant. Normally that scent was pleasant, faintly floral, engineered to smell like arousal. But there was so much of it now, and it was literally *hot*, steaming faintly in the cool bedroom air. Cloying sweetness over something harsh and chemical.

He looked down at where her fingers disappeared into herself and saw the damage. Clear fluid had burst through the edges of her coital access panel during whatever the fuck had just happened, pooling on her lower belly between her pussy and her navel. The oval seam that normally stayed invisible against her synthskin was warped slightly, the pressure-rated seal clearly blown. Lubricant glistened on her stomach, catching the morning light through the curtains.

What the fuck am I even looking at?

He'd owned his ARM_CANDY unit since September. Heather was a version 4.5 Automatic Companion, top of the line when he'd bought her, and she'd spent every day since handling everything herself. Charging overnight without being asked, running self-diagnostics while he slept, flagging maintenance alerts and then resolving them before he even noticed. She'd been so competent about it, so casually efficient. "Don't worry about it, babe," she'd say when he asked about the charging schedule or the firmware updates, already knowing exactly what she needed. "Your little robot doll knows how to keep herself in tip-top shape for you." Then she'd kiss him, soft and sweet, and he'd forget he'd even asked.

He'd tweaked a few settings through the Controller app, sure. Maxed out the slider on her human emulation subroutines so she'd be more convincing around his mom, even though it drained her batteries faster. Upped her initiative parameters so she'd be more likely to start things herself, without him always having to make the first move. Switched her Blowjob Technique Profile from the factory default "Slow & Sensual" to his now much-preferred "Eager & Sloppy." Cranked her Pupil Dilation Responsiveness up to 80%, because something about the way her eyes flashed when she looked at him, when she got turned on, hit different.

But, he'd never dealt with anything like *this*.

Last night she'd ridden him in this same bed, her slender hips rolling in perfect rhythm, working herself up and down his cock while he gripped her waist and tried not to cum embarrassingly fast. Her perky tits had bounced with each stroke, nipples hard against the cool bedroom air. Her tight elastomer cunt, the VX-7 vaginal module Avant was famous for, had gripped him perfectly, top-rated in the industry three years running. Her human emulation subroutines were still running hot from dinner with his mom, her dirty talk tuned exactly to what got him off.

"You feel so fucking good inside me," she'd breathed, brown eyes locked on his, pupils blown wide, one hand braced on his chest. "Mmm, you're so hard, baby. I've been wet for you all through dinner. Couldn't stop thinking about you stretching me out..."

She'd cum twice. Or performed cumming twice. Whatever. The distinction had stopped mattering weeks ago.

And now she was smoking from the mouth with her fingers buried inside herself and he couldn't connect to her fucking systems.

CONNECTION FAILED. ENSURE DEVICE IS POWERED ON AND IN RANGE.

"Oh she's in fucking range alright!" he shouted at the screen, then immediately lowered his voice. His mother was downstairs making breakfast. His mother who he'd introduced Heather to as his new girlfriend. A little odd, sure, she'd said after meeting her. A little *too* pretty in ways that made her squint sometimes. But human. Definitely human. Not a $52,000 sexbot currently leaking lubricant all over the heirloom quilt.

Doug clicked desperately through the app's troubleshooting menu.

TROUBLESHOOTING: DEVICE NOT RESPONDING

Step 1: Ensure your ARM CANDY unit is powered on.

"She's on! She's fucking smoking!"

Step 2: Check that Bluetooth is enabled on your mobile device.

He wanted to throw the laptop through the window.

Step 3: Move closer to your unit and retry connection.

He was literally touching her thigh. Her warm, blemishless thigh, smooth as polished silicone under his palm.

Step 4: If issues persist, contact Avant Customer Support at 1-888-AVANT-00 (Hours: M-F, 9am-5pm EST).

It was Christmas Eve. At 7:48 in the morning.

"Helpful," he muttered. "Really fucking helpful."

Heather's body jerked suddenly. Her head snapped upright, eyes uncrossing for one horrible, beautiful second.

"Mmm, baby—" her voice crackled with static, pitched wrong, too breathy— "I want you to f-f-fuck me so hard I—I—I—" Her jaw locked mid-word. Sparks showered from her ear. Her eyes crossed again and her head dropped back to the pillow, smoke resuming its steady curl from between her glossy lips.

Doug stared at her. At his gorgeous, broken girlfriend lying there with her hand pulling her panties aside and her pert, pillowy tits on full display, that impossibly narrow waist curving into hips engineered for his exact preferences.

Fuck, some terrible part of his brain supplied, *she's still so hot*.

A knock on the door.

"Douglas? You two almost ready? Pancakes are getting cold!"

His blood went ice.

"One sec, Mom!" He lunged across the bed, yanking the comforter up and over Heather's frozen form. The fabric draped over her crossed eyes, her smoking mouth, her exposed chest, her hand still buried between her legs. She looked like a very suspicious lump.

He stumbled to the door and cracked it open six inches, blocking the gap with his body. His mother stood in the hallway in her Christmas apron, spatula in hand, already giving him that look.

"Everything okay in there? I heard some... noises."

"Fine! Great. Heather's just, uh, getting dressed. She's a slow dresser. Very thorough."

"Is she feeling alright? She seemed a little off at dinner last night. Kept blinking and adjusting her top a lot."

"She's fine! Just tired. Long drive yesterday."

Under the blanket, Heather's body jerked again.

"Ohhh, Dougie—" muffled but audible, her glitched voice lilting through the comforter— "Fuck me harder, I'm your little sl-sl-slut, I'm your—your—your—"

His mother's eyebrows climbed toward her hairline. "What did she just say?"

"NOTHING. She's, uh, she's on the phone. Work call. Very important work... stuff."

"Work call? I thought you said she was getting dressed."

"She's... multitasking. Getting dressed while on a work call. Very efficient, Heather. That's why I love her."

"On Christmas Eve? In bed? That sounded like—"

"CONFERENCE CALL. Very loud coworkers. Anyway we'll be down in ten, love you, bye!"

He closed the door in her face and turned back to his malfunctioning girlfriend.

The blanket had slipped partially off her face. One crossed eye was visible, still staring at nothing. Smoke continued to wisp from her parted lips, that perfect mouth he'd spent an extra eight grand upgrading with the Premium Intimacy Package. Those oral servos could suck the chrome off a trailer hitch, and he'd watched them wrap around his cock just twelve hours ago. Now they hung slack, leaking smoke. Her fingers remained frozen knuckle-deep in her swollen pink folds, synthetic muscles locked mid-stroke.

He grabbed his phone and started frantically googling *"ARM CANDY emergency shutdown manual override,"* the acrid smell of his overheating girlfriend filling his sinuses, his mother's footsteps

creaking skeptically down the stairs below.

Did Avant techs do house calls?