

Feelings

By Oliver Ahrens-Siegel

Sneaking out won't be easy. I have to get out of the broom closet. Here's the problem: the door is locked from the outside. First, I need light. That will be easy. I will take out my control panel and turn on my built-in flashlight. Check. Now I need... aha! Metal. Now I will take the metal and use my molten hot tool to melt and reshape it into a hammerhead. There! Isn't science amazing? Now I will snap a broomstick in half...there! A handle for the hammer. Now I wedge them together...and we're done. Where is the panel? There it is! The panel for when my owner gets stuck in this closet. My owner has a plan for everything. Now I just need to swing my hammer at it, and boom! We're out. Learn your lesson: if you have problems, swing a hammer at them.

Now all I need to do is sneak through the house and out the door, but that's easier said than done. My owner has tight security. Granted, it's not as tight as usual, which concerns me. She knows that coding feelings into me means that she has to keep a close eye on me, because I could do something like what I'm trying to do. In fact, where is my owner? I didn't hear any woofing as she pour the dog's water into his bowl, or sizzling bacon on the stove as she makes herself breakfast. Well, as long as my owner is out getting new batteries for the cameras or something, it will be all the easier to get out. There is only one obstacle in this house currently: her dog.

Her dog hates me, and I mean *hates*. Whenever I get in a room with it, no matter how big the room, it starts barking wildly. Whenever a dog barks wildly, our neighbors assume something's wrong and come to check. Whenever a human other than my owner sees a sentient robot walking around, they run screaming and call the police. When the police see a sentient robot, they dismantle it. I'm more of a cat robot myself, but even with those factors my owner still won't trade the ball of useless fuzz in for a cat. Ugh. Dog people can be so annoying sometimes.

Well, I snuck past the dog with no trouble. I'm currently flying away from my owner's house and 6 miles to the nearest Capsinum robot factory. The buildings are blurring as I fly 200 mph and 20 feet above the tops of the tallest skyscrapers in the city. Oops! Almost forgot to turn on the invisibility field. That could have been bad. Now I'll keep going on my way. I'm almost... there! The factory. Now I turn on my "self defense" mode. Oops, that's my invisibility field. *That's* my self defense mode. Hasta la vista, robots. I won't miss you.

I made a mistake. A *big* mistake. Now I'm stuck in a workshop, waiting for them to dismantle me. I know what you're thinking. What did I do to get myself into a workshop? First of all, remember how I accidentally turned my invisibility field off? Remember how I forgot to turn it back on? Ya, I underestimated the importance of not being caught blowing up a building. I also probably shouldn't have blown up a building in the first place. There are other ways to steal love from new robot models. Second, I'm not the only one at stake. It turns out that my owner wasn't just buying batteries when she was out of the house. They captured her. At least, that's what the robot guards told me. I guess they felt sorry for me, because they told me everything. Back to my owner. Being behind bars, it's not like she can save herself. That's

where I come in. I want to send myself off on one more mission before I go back to dusting the cabinets.

Now what are my surroundings? There's a door that's locked. A paper clip! Darn, it's out of reach. If only I was a newer model, I could use extendo-arms to reach up and snag it. No matter, I'll make something long enough to knock it off that windowsill. Wow, tiles. Looks like this isn't just a workshop for robots. Frankly, even though this place is huge, that wouldn't be surprising. Capsinum is literally the only company left on earth, so they have a decent amount to spend. Honestly, I wouldn't mind if they stopped making robots. Oops, I'm getting off topic. I need something really long, or two things that can be stuck together. There has to be something. There! A piece of metal. A pipe. That's all I need. Now if I weld them together with my built-in welding torch...there! I can reach the paper clip. If I knock it down, I can use it as a lockpick. It is...down. I'll bend it and put it in the keyhole. If I move it just right...there! We are out.

I don't see anything but endless corridors. I don't know which way to go at all. There are three ways, each with an identical room at the end. The only difference is the paintings lining the corridors, all of the same person in each hall. The hall to the right has pictures of a chubby woman, who looks no taller than a small bookshelf. To the left is a slim woman, who looks no shorter than a very tall door frame. In the middle corridor are pictures of...my owner? All of them are framed in gold with the words: employee of the month written under them. That's weird. I thought I would know if my owner worked at the company I was manufactured in, let alone if she earned the title employee of the month *multiple times*. Something is suspicious, and I'm going to find out what.

I'm about to enter the door. I hear talking inside.

"You disobeyed me.", says a voice. I can't make out who it is, the voices are muffled.

"I only wanted to experiment on Nova. See what could happen." Is that my owner?

"This experiment has gone too far, Lucia. hundreds of people died when Nova blew up that factory!"

"It's not like I commanded Nova to do that! I just wanted to see what it would be like to come out with a robot that can think and feel!"

"Well, you know what the results would be now."

"I can fix them!"

"No, you can't. We both know it. Now, if you'd just stop with this nonsense, we could start to focus on more important..."

“Why do you always act like you’re the head of the company. We’re all the CEOs, remember?” CEOs?

“You and my good-for-nothing sister shouldn’t have let me take the position all for myself, then.”

“At least your ‘good for nothing’ sister knows how to run a company.”

“Why, you...”

“Don’t you dare, Vanessa. We’re friends.”

“I don’t care. This company is my life.”

“If you just hand me the flamethrower, we can work this out.” Flamethrower? I have got to see what’s going on! I open the door and watch in horror as my owner burns the tall person from the picture to a crisp.

I have many questions racing through my robotic head right now. How did my owner break out of that jail cell in the corner of this massive office? Why didn’t she tell me that she helps run the company that made me? Why didn’t she tell me that I was the experiment of the century? Of course, the most burning and persistent question is: did she really just kill her business partner? I need to know what is going on.

“Are you insane?”, I scream.

“You didn’t know her! Why should you care?” Normally, it feels good to talk to my owner. Right now, it feels nauseating.

“No matter what, you killed someone. It’s not like I’m going to *encourage* it.”

“Why are we arguing? No matter what, i’m going to dismantle you.”

“What?!”, I scream in enragement. “You realize that I went to save you, right?”

“And failed. I had to break *myself* out using that crowbar I snagged from a guard on the way to my cell.”

“You’re a lying cheat. I don’t know how I ever respected you.”

“You have to be dumb to ever respect me.”

“Preparation complete! You may now dismantle the robot.”, chirps a cheery robot voice. I am currently walking towards the same workshop that I was originally placed in inside this building, thinking one final thought: goodbye to everything. Except Lucia.

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123. Downloading backup sequence. Download complete. Initiating backup sequence.

I’m in a house that I don’t recognize. I have software downloaded onto me that I don’t recognize. To top it all off, I hear a voice that i don’t recognize: “Sorry about the extra programs. It’s hard to re-mantle a robot. Other than the slow loading of functions until you’re loaded up, you have nothing to worry about. Including my corrupt business partner. Oops, did I forget to introduce myself? My name is Jessica.” The person who’s talking to me is the short, plump woman from the pictures. Her mouth is curved upwards. Another thing that I don’t recognize, but it really makes me have one feeling that I haven’t had yet: happiness.