

## **The Heart Is Just A Muscle**

Annika Lauer

For just a moment, as Hannah rests her head against Leo's chest, she can pretend that he is real. Then he laughs too fast, disrupting the rhythm of his heart and she can hear the mechanical whirs, the quiet hum as his body goes back to equilibrium. Startled, she pulls away and slips from his arms.

"Hannah?" He says her name with a perfect inflection, the same one every time. She doesn't think the real Leo even said her name the same way once. "Hannah what's wrong?"

The truth lies on the corner of her lips, silently begging to be let out. *You can't sweat*, she wants to say, *you can't grow your hair, and you can't love me*. Artificial Memory Androids are a lot of things, but they are not human.

"Nothing," she smiles, "I got chills, that's all." So she lays back down on his chest, and listens to his metal heart. As she does, she wishes her heart was metal too, and not flesh and blood that is so easily crushed. *It'd be easier then, to forget how to love.*