JoAnn walked through the jungle. Keeping one hand on her knife and the other hand on her belt she forged through looking around making sure there were no surprises to be had. Not knowing the rules of this year's race, she would have to wing it. Hopefully nothing would happen to her before she ran into Dex. Dex owed her. JoAnn thought. He owed her big time. All she had to do was collect.

Hearing a twig snap in the distance, JoAnn dove for cover behind a bush. She looked in the direction of the sound. She couldn’t see anything. Either it was a small animal or it was a person who was hiding from her.

Coming out of hiding, JoAnn walked towards another bush. As she reached it, she made a quick swipe at it with her knife. There was nothing there.

Probably just a small animal. She thought.

As she walked away from the bush, a set of eyes watched her. They didn’t belong to another animal or insect. They weren’t even human. Just a set of eyes belonging to someone hiding behind a tree waiting to strike attached to some larger beast.

JoAnn continued walking. Reaching a clearing she came upon a house. A fire was lit in the fireplace. Smoke came from the chimney. Putting the knife in its sheath she walked towards the house.

The house was of simple design. Four walls, no windows. A small door to the north. JoAnn figured there would be food inside for her to eat. Maybe a cot to get some rest on. She opened the door.

Inside the house, JoAnn found a small table with chairs on the west side of the small dwelling. On the east end was a double bed, to the south a fireplace sat. There was a pot hanging over the fireplace cooking something. JoAnn approached the pot and lifted the lid.

The smell of whatever was in the pot hit her sinuses immediately. Something she didn’t want to eat for sure. Whatever it was. Coughing, she put the lid back on the pot and walked over to the bed. JoAnn laid down on the bed. Just a few minutes of sleep. That’s all she would need. JoAnn would move out again after that.

The beast with the eyes watched the house from afar. Nodding he smiled. She had taken the bait. Walking towards the house, the hydraulics in his legs could be heard making a squeaking noise. Pausing, the robot took out an oil can and poured it over his knees. Moving his right leg and then the left, he was satisfied when they no longer squeaked. Looking down to his left foot, the robot noticed it had a hole the size of a baseball in it. He would have to repair himself before it started raining. Rain would damage his insides.

Opening the door to the house, the robot looked around. JoAnn was asleep on the bed. As he moved towards her, she woke up.

JoAnn grabbed her knife and rushed over to the robot. She stabbed at his stomach. The knife bent. JoAnn dropped the knife and continued kicking him. The robot picked her up by her hands and threw her across the room.

JoAnn landed on top of the table hitting her head against the wall. She went unconscious.

Looking at the knife, the robot picked it up and straightened it. He threw it in the fire. The robot moved towards JoAnn. Nudging her on the shoulder to make sure she wasn’t playing possum, he picked her up and placed her on a chair. Grabbing some rope nearby, the robot tied her to the chair. Not tight enough to cut off circulation. Just enough so when she came to she couldn’t move about and get free.

He watched as she slept making sure she was still breathing. After being satisfied with her, the robot walked over to the bed and attended to his damaged foot. Sitting down on the bed, he pulled out a small toolbox from underneath.

Raising his foot on the bed, the robot went to work. First removing the foot and then using tools to create a replacement metal plate that could cover the hole. He had been on his own for a long time without a master to watch and take care of him. Learning to do things by himself hadn’t been easy.

After fixing his foot, the robot put the toolbox back under the bed and sat there. Watching her. What was he going to do with her now that he had her? It had been a long time since a human had entered the cabin. Most of them hadn’t bothered with it. The race had been more important. Getting to the finish line was more important than looking for shelter.

He had been safe for one hundred and twenty years, and now this. The robot shook his head. Melted flesh started to fall from his metal skeleton. He picked up a mirror. Half of his face was rotting away from the passage of time. More than seventy-five percent of the skin was missing. He smiled. Skin had been a luxury. After a while he had learned to live without it. The robot didn’t even know what the skin was for. He was a machine. It would have been of no use for him. Still he cared the best he could for the gift that was given him. It would only be a matter of time before the skin would fall completely off.

Hours passed. JoAnn came to. Looking around the cabin, she saw the robot looking at her with interest.

Struggling with the ropes, she looked around for her knife.

“It’s in the fire.” The robot said. “I figured you wouldn’t need it.”

JoAnn looked to the fireplace, her weapon was there glowing hot red. Too hot to touch. She wondered if she would ever get it back. JoAnn continued to struggle with the restraints.

The robot lifted a finger. “If you keep that up, the ropes will only get tighter.” He said. “At least that’s what they taught us.”

JoAnn stopped struggling. They? She looked to the robot with confusion across her face. “Who are they?”

The robot hesitated for a moment. “The people in charge.” He said. “When I was in the race, it was Eugine Mickelson. But that was well over a century ago.”

JoAnn looked to the machine. Was he telling the truth or was he just part of this years race. An obstacle she had to overcome.

“I thought robots weren’t allowed in the race.” She said. “Only humans.”

Cocking his head to the side, the robot smiled. His face slid further down his face as he did so. “That rule came into effect the year after I was in the race.” He said. “Too many people had died by robot hand. A malfunction of some kind. They also threw in the rule that people couldn’t kill each other. That it would be for sportsmanship alone.” Shrugging he looked to the floor. “Sportsmanship. I don’t know what that even means. I was one of the last to survive. My maker had made me in his image you see. I was put in his place. He hid after that. Disappeared from all contact.”

The robot stood up. “As the officials saw that I would be the winner, my identity was made known. Disqualified, I was banished to the race venue for as long as I would survive.”

He placed his hands at his sides. “You’re the first human I’ve talked to in years.” Walking over, the robot put his hand on JoAnn’s cheek. “I use to have a face.” He said pointing to his own malformed face. “It’s long since gone.” The robot kneeled at her side.

JoAnn moved as far away from him as she could. Which wasn’t far at all. She watched as he moved his hand up her arm.

“So long.” He said. “Far too long.” The robot studied her facial reactions. Her movement. “One would think a robot wouldn’t be interested in human contact.” He dropped his hand to his side again and stood up. “I’ve missed talking to people. My maker made me so good that I develop a sense of loss when they are gone.”

JoAnn rolled her eyes. “Yeah whatever. What do you want with me?”

He smiled. “Nothing. I just want a friend for a few days. A week at the most. You are free to go after that.”

She looked at him. He just wanted a friend? That’s it? Nothing else? Huh, she thought. What the hell is wrong with this thing?

“I’m kinda busy at the moment.” She said. “I’m trying to hunt down someone actually.”

The robot nodded. “Yes. Dexter.” He responded. “I heard the whole communication over wireless frequencies. I’ve led him off in a different direction. He won’t find you for a few days as it is.” The robot explained. “By the day our time together is over, I’ll give you your knife back and you are free to do to him as you see fit.”

JoAnn shook her head in disbelief. “What do you mean you led him in a different direction?”

The robot nodded. “Yes. He’s on the other side of the forest. All alone. If he manages to get a robot army along with him, they won’t attack me. They sure won’t attack you. He’ll have to do the killing all by himself.”

“Okay” JoAnn said slowly. “Mind getting me out of these restraints?”

“Can I trust you?”

She smiled. “Yeah of course you can. Like you said we’re waiting for him right? He’s coming to us. So yeah why not?” She moved her legs up and down.

The robot smiled. “Alright, I’ll let you go. But on one condition.”

“Yes?”

“Name me.” He said.

JoAnn looked to the robot amused. He wanted a name? How weird and strange was that.

“You don’t have a name?” She asked.

The robot shook his head. “No. My master never named me. I have thought about taking his name, but that was a long time ago. I don’t think it fits me as it is.”

JoAnn smiled. “What was your maker’s name?”

“Herbert.”

JoAnn laughed. “Alright, I’ll name you. Now please let me go?”

The robot smiled. “Very well.” Untying her he helped her stand up from the chair.

JoAnn looked to her captor and then to the door. There was a reason he didn’t have windows. She made a move towards the door. The robot followed and stood in front of the door.

There goes that idea. She thought. I wonder if he sleeps. Moving back over to the chair she sat down.

“A name.” JoAnn said. “Dennis? No, you don’t look like a dennis. Harvey? Nah not that one either.” She ran through a bunch of different names. The robot didn’t say a word as she did so. He just watched her reason out one name after another.

After about a hundred different names, JoAnn snapped her fingers. “I’ve got it! We’ll call you Andy.”

The robot tilted his head. “Andy” he repeated.

JoAnn nodded. “Yeah, it’s short for Android.”

“But I am not an android.” He said. “I am a robot. There is a difference.”

JoAnn laughed. “Trust me, it’s a good name. Andy.”

The robot nodded. “I accept.”