

On The Fritz

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EXT. PETER'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

LAURA, late 20s, wearing tidy slacks, a blouse, and minimal makeup, knocks on the door of a grungy house. She holds a small box. A sign on the door reads NO COLD CALLERS. Someone's crossed out the word 'Cold.'

AIDEN, 20s, classically handsome and bundled in several layers of clothing, waits with her. He's eerily still.

A curtain twitches in the living room. Laura knocks again. Loudly. A voice inside yells:

PETER (O.S.)  
For fuck's sake!

The door opens. PETER "Not a people person" MCKENZIE, 30s, glasses, dressed in pajamas, glares at them.

PETER  
What do you want?

Laura stares at him, taken aback by his tone.

LAURA  
I'm looking for McKenzie Repairs?

PETER  
Repairs are by appointment only.

He starts to shut the door. She holds it with her arm.

LAURA  
I'm Laura. Maybe you recognize that from the 15 emails and messages I've left.

Peter huffs out an annoyed breath.

PETER  
Laura. Your Lovebot's on the fritz.

Laura nods at Aiden. Aiden extends his hand.

AIDEN  
Hi, I'm Aiden. Model Triple X 900.  
Can you help me?

Peter ignores his hand but opens the door and steps out of the way. Aiden and Laura enter.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

Shabby furniture is scattered around a large TV. It's a bachelor's pad in every sense.

Peter ushers them in, hastily turning the TV off. Laura catches a glimpse of a video game. He gestures at the sofa. Laura moves over to it.

Peter grabs a repair request form from a stack currently being used as a beer drink coaster. He hands it to Laura. She reads the certified technician's name.

LAURA  
Peter McKenzie.

PETER  
Please fill this out, sign and date.

LAURA  
What is it?

PETER  
Repair request. Ownership details,  
description of the problem, limit of  
liability.

Her pen hovers over description of the problem. She writes:  
Two malfunctions in performance. Peter reads over her  
shoulder.

PETER (cont'd)  
Two malfunctions in performance? Can  
you be a little less specific? The  
amount of detail in your response is  
overwhelming.

LAURA  
Can't you just run a test or  
something?

PETER  
He's like a car! And like a car, it  
helps to know WHAT I'm trying to  
test.

LAURA  
Fine! Diagnose that.

She points at Aiden. He's stark naked. Peter's unperturbed.

PETER  
He's a LoveBot. Nudity is part of the program.

LAURA  
Does the program include stripping in the Waitrose bread aisle?

Peter makes a note on a notepad.

PETER  
What's the second problem?

Laura squirms. She glances at Aiden, and quickly away.

AIDEN  
(helpful)  
I am unable to achieve a state of arousal.

LAURA  
Aiden! Get dressed!

Peter raises his eyebrows but nods. He takes the paperwork from Laura, hands her a receipt.

PETER  
I'll have to run a full diagnostic. You can collect him in a week.

Peter leaves. Laura follows him into his bedroom.

INT. PETER'S BEDROOM

It's a mess of wires and clothes. Another male robot, HAYDEN, lies fully clothed on a yoga mat with sunglasses on. Peter removes the glasses.

LAURA  
A week?! The website guarantees repairs in 8 hours.

PETER  
With an APPOINTMENT.

LAURA  
Which I tried to make!

PETER  
Don't like it? Take him somewhere else.

Peter collects his laptop off his bed.

LAURA  
This is the only certified repair  
shop for 100 miles!

PETER  
Exactly. I'm swamped.

LAURA  
Did I do something to you?

Peter looks at her. Really looks for the first time.

PETER  
(grumbled)  
I'm not a people person.

He leaves with the sunglasses and laptop. She follows him  
back into the living room. Aiden's dressed again.

LAURA  
Well. Peter "not a people person"  
Mckenzie. You're going to fix Aiden.  
By tonight. Or I will tell Pleasure  
Partners their technician failed to  
deliver.

He glares at her, then hands the sunglasses to Aiden. Aiden  
puts them on. Peter opens his laptop. Awkward silence falls.

Laura looks at the couch with slight distaste. She sits  
carefully on one edge and digs through her box.

LAURA (cont'd)  
I, um, I have the receipt right here.  
And the - the reset stick.

PETER  
Hopefully it won't come to that.

LAURA  
So, what made you get into repairs?

PETER  
I like machines. And quiet.

LAURA  
(quietly)  
Noted.

Awkward silence extends. Laura studies Peter. He looks up,  
catching her gaze. She's embarrassed, but he's preoccupied.

PETER  
There's something... odd, but it's  
not throwing any errors.

LAURA  
What does that mean?

PETER  
I'll need you to demonstrate the  
second problem.

Laura stands up.

LAURA  
Demonstrate?!

PETER  
Display. Exhibit. Show evidence of. I  
need to analyze it while it's  
happening.

LAURA  
Oh, pray tell. How am I supposed to  
demonstrate that?

PETER  
He's programmed to emulate human  
behavior, including physical  
stimulation. I need to see where the  
disconnect is.

LAURA  
How.

PETER  
Kiss him.

Laura's shocked. She glances between Aiden and Peter.

LAURA  
You're kidding.

PETER  
Do you want him to be fixed or not?

Laura cautiously approaches Aiden. She sits next to him. And  
kisses him chastely on the lips. He doesn't move or respond.

PETER (cont'd)  
Jesus. Now I see the problem.

LAURA  
What's that supposed to mean?

PETER

I kiss me maw with more affection than that. Open your mouth a little more.

LAURA

I think I know how to kiss!

Peter raises a skeptical brow. Laura glares at Peter, then looks at Aiden and moves onto his lap. She slowly kisses her way from the corner of his lips up the side of his neck to his ear, nibbling his earlobe.

Peter holds his breath. She looks at him and slides off Aiden's lap.

LAURA (cont'd)

(annoyed)

Well?

Peter's breath WOOSHES out. He looks hastily back at the computer. He's surprised by the results.

PETER

Um - wow. A small elevation in heartrate but not - umm - not within the range of normal response. I'll try to increase his emotional sensitivity.

Peter hits a few buttons. Aiden keeps trying to unbutton his shirt. Laura stops him. Peter presses enter.

PETER (cont'd)

That should do it.

Aiden's head sags as he reboots. His head comes up again. He tilts his head until he finds Laura. He smiles, but it wavers. And he bursts into tears.

Laura takes his hand. Aiden pulls all of his extra clothes on top of himself, then the blanket off the couch, then Laura. He buries his face in her shoulder and cries.

LAURA

Aiden? What's wrong?

(to Peter)

What did you do to him? He's never cried before!

PETER

I - I don't know, it shouldn't even be possible.

LAURA  
Well, undo it! He's traumatized!

PETER  
He's a glorified hello world program  
Laura, he can't be traumatized!

They both look at Aiden. The tears have stopped. He glances at an empty glass on the table. And breaks down again.

AIDEN  
It's empty! The glass is empty!

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM - LATER

LAURA  
Peter, hurry up, he's recapping  
Doctor Who's saddest moments and I  
can't take much more!

Peter's frantically typing on the computer. Laura holds Aiden as he snuffles on the couch.

AIDEN  
She can't even touch him, because  
he's a hologram. And then - she  
says -

LAURA  
'I love you.'

AIDEN  
And he - he says -

LAURA  
Aiden, that's enough.

Peter looks at Laura. And presses a button.

AIDEN  
'If it's one last chance to say it,  
Rose Tyler -'

Aiden's head droops, silencing the sobbing. Laura sighs in relief and meets Peter's eyes. They share a moment.

LAURA  
Now what?

PETER  
Now you go home.



INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

Laura stands across from Peter, hands on hips.

LAURA  
I'm not leaving without Aiden.

PETER  
This is not an 8-hour fix, website or  
not!

LAURA  
Then I'll take a replacement.

Laura marches past him into the bedroom.

She bends down to the other robot (HAYDEN) on his floor,  
about to wake him up. Peter grabs her.

PETER  
No no no no! That one's military  
issue. You do not want it waking up.

LAURA  
Then find me another!

PETER  
Sure, I've got another replacement.

Peter storms into the kitchen. Laura follows him.

INT. PETER'S KITCHEN

He opens a kitchen drawer, pulls out a sausage balloon, and  
puts it to his lips. It starts to inflate.

He blows between sentences.

PETER  
No malfunctions. Fully washable. You  
can even adjust the size.

Laura slaps him.

LAURA  
You think I need him for sex?

PETER  
He's a Lovebot!

LAURA

He was a gift! To celebrate my promotion. And my family is always pressuring me to find someone, so I kind of told them - Forget it. I'm taking Aiden home. At least now he won't strip naked while my sister is walking down the aisle.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

Laura takes Aiden's glasses off and presses behind his shoulder. He wakes up. Laura takes his hand.

LAURA

Aiden. We're leaving.

Aiden stares at her hand. And trails his fingertips up her arm. She looks at him curiously. He pulls her in closer, on top of him on the couch, and kisses her passionately.

Peter clears his throat.

AIDEN

What's the rush?

PETER

(to himself)

I think I overdid it. But that's impossible. I barely changed anything.

Aiden looks at her and smiles sexily. She stands up and pulls him with her.

PETER (cont'd)

Wait, Laura, I have to run a few more tests.

LAURA

No no, I can do it. Thorough test-s.

She's nearly at the door. A KNOCK sounds.

PETER'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Peter? Are you home?

Peter squeezes past them to answer it.

PETER

Mam? What are you doing here?

PETER'S MOTHER, sweet, elderly, enters carrying a large bowl of food.

PETER'S MOTHER  
I made you some lasagne. Have you eaten?

PETER  
Ah, I have clients here.

PETER'S MOTHER  
And a charming looking pair they are.

She holds out her hand. Laura shakes it.

LAURA  
I'm Laura.

Aiden likewise takes her hand.

AIDEN  
I'm Aiden.

He pulls her in exactly the same way he had Laura, heading for a kiss.

Peter grabs him by the shirt and hauls him back.

PETER'S MOTHER  
Oh! Well. What a - friendly young man.

PETER  
Uh, right, thanks for the lasagne mam.

Peter ushers his mother out.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

Peter comes back into the living room and gets the sunglasses.

PETER  
What the hell do you think you're doing mate? That was my mam!

He approaches Aiden with the sunglasses. Aiden catches his hand and pulls him in for a sensual hug, massaging Peter's shoulders.

AIDEN  
Peter, Peter, so tense.

Aiden gets an inch from Peter's lips. And shuts down.

Peter looks at Laura.

PETER  
This is going to take awhile.  
Lasagne?

INT. PETER'S BEDROOM

Aiden lies on a yoga mat, eyes closed. Next to him, on another yoga mat, lies HAYDEN - another male robot.

Peter sits on the bed with his laptop. A wire goes from it to Aiden. Laura sits on the other edge of the bed. Empty lasagne bowls sit nearby. She points to Jayden.

LAURA  
What's wrong with him?

PETER  
Violent tendencies. Unrepairable.  
He's going to be destroyed tomorrow.

LAURA  
I'm sorry.

Peter shrugs.

PETER  
Ok, override complete. That should do it.

He hits a final button. And Aiden convulses violently.

LAURA  
What's happening?

PETER  
I don't know.

LAURA  
Shut him down!

PETER  
If I do that now he may suffer permanent damage! Get the reset stick!

Laura rushes out and grabs a USB stick from her box. She rushes back and Peter inserts it into the computer.

LAURA

Wait! Will this - will he be gone?

PETER

Laura. We don't have a choice.

She takes Aiden's hand. And nods. Peter hits Enter. Aiden's convulsions stop.

LAURA

Is he going to be okay?

PETER

He'll be completely reset, anything you - did together will have to be relearned.

LAURA

We didn't - Just a Firefly marathon mainly.

PETER

You know Firefly?

LAURA

I swear by my pretty floral bonnet. I'm a hardcore geek.

PETER

Ok, Battlestar galactica.

LAURA

I don't want to be human! I want to see gamma rays! I want to hear X-rays! And I want to -

PETER AND LAURA

I want to smell dark matter!

PETER

That was a great moment. Stolen from Bladerunner though.

LAURA

No way!

PETER

"I've seen things you people wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion."

They move closer to each other. About to kiss.

Aiden opens his eyes and sits up.

AIDEN  
Hello. What is my name?

Laura rushes to his side.

LAURA  
Aiden.

AIDEN  
Confirmed. I am Aiden. Are you my  
mistress?

LAURA  
Yes. I'm Laura.

AIDEN  
Confirmed. Laura. Which program would  
you like me to initiate? Classic,  
Vampire, School teacher,

LAURA  
Um, none, not right now.

He stands up. Laura hugs him tentatively. He returns it. She  
meets Peter's sad gaze over Aiden's shoulder.

LAURA (cont'd)  
We - we should probably get going.

Laura pulls away.

AIDEN  
Sorry. That's not on today's  
schedule.

He flips Laura around and starts choking her.

PETER  
Aiden! Stop!

AIDEN  
Get in the closet! Now!

Laura presses the Shutdown key on Aiden's neck. Nothing  
happens.

PETER  
That's impossible!

Aiden tightens his grip on Laura's neck.

AIDEN  
Closet! NOW!

PETER  
Ok! Just let her go.

Peter backs into the closet. Aiden shoves Laura in after him. Peter catches her. Aiden shuts the closet and blocks it with a dresser.

Then he hooks the other AI up the computer.

INT. CLOSET

Peter and Laura watch through the closet slats.

PETER  
The reset stick! Sneaky bastard.

AIDEN  
Hayden. Time to wake up.

Aiden bends down and cradles the sleeping Hayden AI, kissing him tenderly. Hayden opens his eyes.

HAYDEN  
You came for me.

AIDEN  
No power in the verse could stop me.

INT. CLOSET

LAURA  
Now that's a kiss.

Peter rolls his eyes.

PETER  
Girls.

INT. PETER'S BEDROOM

Aiden pulls Hayden to his feet.

AIDEN

Not that it was easy. I thought my  
stupid owner would NEVER take me in  
for repairs.

INT. CLOSET

LAURA (O.S.)

Hey!

The robots gather the laptop, talking quietly.

PETER

No! Not my laptop!

He crowds against Laura's back, trying to see better. And  
pauses. They both realize how close they are. And feel the  
electricity.

AIDEN

... And then I tried to kiss his  
mother. You should've seen his face!

The two robots laugh.

HAYDEN

Humans.