



The Long Sad Life of MB15850

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Olivia was always a happy girl; her upbringing was fairly normal, happy family with two parents and a single daughter, Olivia. As a child she loved going to theme parks with her parents, like Walt Disney World in Florida. One thing that especially fascinated her was the animatronic, or as Disney called them Audio-Animatronic, figures. In particular she loved the Pirates of the Caribbean attraction and the Country Bear Jamboree.

As she grew up her fascination with the technology only grew, and in school she excelled in science and, in particular, electronics. When she graduated High School and headed off to college, it was to get her degree in Electronic Engineering and Robotics. Skills that she hoped would help her get into the industry upon graduating. And indeed, she did get

a job working at a company that made, well sort of, animatronics. But there were a few catches, one, she had to move across the country to work for her new employer. And two, her job with the company wasn't exactly what she had originally envisioned.

You see the company she worked for MaidTech, Inc. built reasonably realistic looking humanoid robots called MaidBots. As you can guess, these were essentially robotic maids that could be purchased to clean and maintain either personal residences, or commercial enterprises; like hotels and businesses. Olivia wanted to work in the design and development department, but initially was hired to work on the production line. Her job, which slightly embarrassed her, was to dress the nearly completed MaidBots and inspect them to ensure that they met all company requirements before being shipped.

Olivia's parents were quite pleased and impressed with their daughter's new job, although she might have left out a few details about what her job entailed. Nevertheless, Olivia had a nice, if not a bit small, apartment in town and did her job well, always taking pride in her work and hoping to eventually advance. After all, the company did have a reputation of trying to advance their people from within; so she figured she had her foot in the door.

Two years passed, Olivia was getting tired of her job dressing and inspecting the MaidBots and had become friends with another employee, James, who worked in the R&D department where Olivia someday hoped to be working. The two were talking about James' research into a vastly improved AI for the units. It was James' opinion that the current models were too "Robotic," sure they were robots, but he wanted to create an AI that could make them seem more real. James knew that the units didn't really look terribly like a real person, but he felt that the more "Personality" a unit had, the more people would accept them into their daily lives.

James and Olivia secretly began dating a few months later and Olivia had been helping James with his research secretly, when she was not working. The two had designed a device that James thought was the answer. Real AI software was a human approximation of a human personality, but still made by man and very imperfect. James' revolutionary idea was to find a willing test subject that would allow him to scan their mind with his new machine, into the computer; well actually a copy, and then he could base his new AI on a modified version of that personality.

Naturally, Olivia volunteered to be the test subject; after all, she trusted James and thought his work had merit. James even told her that, if they were successful, he would include Olivia on his research presentation as a co-researcher. He was sure that, when upper management saw the results, they would move her into the R&D department; along with a large improvement in her paycheck. The company was old fashioned and only worked Monday thru Friday, during the weekend the building was essentially empty; that was when they did their secret work.

James and Olivia spent many weekends working together in his lab and eventually, their hard work was done, they had a potentially working prototype of his scanner which they

hoped to test soon. But by the time the machine was ready, it was time to call it quits and head home to his apartment. Olivia still had her own apartment but spent much of her time at James' apartment instead. She still maintained her contract and paid the monthly rent, both as a place to keep most of her stuff, and so that; should her parents decide to surprise her with a visit, she had a place to go. They still didn't know about her and James.

Because of the great distance between them, and the fact that Olivia was a fairly independent girl, her parents rarely visited, usually only at Christmas. It was now July and she and James were ready to try out the machine. The first test did not work, data was received but it was not fully intact. But subsequent tries improved the system until the day that the computer returned a 100% complete, data verified; message greeted them after a scan. James saved the scan data to a removable data drive and took it home for safe keeping, but not before the two of them went out to celebrate.

They had a good time, unfortunately too good a time! During the drive back to her apartment, James and Olivia were involved in a very serious wreck and while James was badly injured, requiring a month off work while he healed, Olivia didn't make it. James was crushed, and naturally the police investigated but found that he was not at fault. James had told them that he was taking a friend from work home when the accident occurred, he didn't fill in any of the juicy details though, and since there seemed to be no foul play involved, James was cleared of all charges or responsibility for the wreck.

Olivia's parents were totally destroyed to hear that their only daughter had been killed in a car wreck, but lacking any other choice, they dealt with it and tried to move on. At the funeral James met her parents and told them what a wonderful girl she was, he said that the two of them had grown quite close at work; she had even inspired his latest research. They told him how much it pleased them to hear nice things about their daughter like that and how it helped with the grief. James then asked them a favor, he said that he would like to name his next project Olivia in honor of their daughter, and would that be OK? Naturally they were flattered and gave an enthusiastic YES! (They might have been a bit more hesitant if they knew more about his project.)

Once he recovered and returned to his lab, James began working even harder on his and Olivia's idea. The first thing he did was make a backup of the scan of Olivia's mind, two actually; just in case. Then he loaded a copy of 'Olivia' into the computer at work and began making minor changes. Overall he wanted her personality to be intact, along with all her memories, but he did need to add a few things. Since Olivia had been a human woman, with all the rights and freedoms that come with that, he needed to add in a control routine which would override her natural instinct to fight her orders.

While James should have had more tact and moral compass guiding him, he was at heart a geek, obsessed with succeeding in the creation of his new AI system. Olivia would never, voluntarily, have agreed to the modifications he made to her personality. Her new programming would force her to behave much like any other MaidBot; she could not refuse an order from her owner, Master, or Mistress. She could not speak unless spoken

to, or if it was required by the MaidBot AI that she was incorporated into. With the changes, Olivia was really just a subroutine running under the AI Operating System, she could add to its functionality but was subordinate to it. Essentially, Olivia would be along for the ride, a prisoner within whatever android “Body” she was eventually installed in.

Along with the domestication changes, she would now be docile and subordinate to whoever owned or rented her. This was not a very considerate thing for James to do, but it was necessary for Olivia to operate properly as a MaidBot. After all, a MaidBot was property, an object owned by, and forced to serve its owner. A MaidBot had no say in any matter, nor choice in what she was commanded to do; total obedience was mandatory. Her owner, or anyone else for that matter, could even shut down her ability to move if they felt it needed or in danger; the MaidBots all had an E-Stop button on their abdomen that would instantly halt all animation should it be pressed.

James then set to work on adding additional programming that he felt his perfect MaidBot would need, rules on proper protocol and maid mannerisms, every kind of information that a maid could ever need on cleaning and maintenance, and even the proper pose a maid should have when walking, working, or even standing at attention while awaiting new orders. James was sure this unit would be perfect and so he then began the next phase of his plan, physical integration with an android frame.

James acquired a new MaidBot fresh off the line; it was even dressed in the standard uniform that all MaidTech MaidBots were required to wear. It had the proper markings indicating its manufacturer and even sported its serial number which uniquely identified it. James uploaded his newly created ‘Olivia’ AI into the unit but decided to wait until the next day to activate it. Then he copied the new ‘Olivia’ AI to both of his backup drives, made a post-it to help him remember, it indicated that he needed to run a full compatibility diagnostic on the “Olivia” AI in the morning, before activating the new unit. Then he took one of the backup drives, and left to go home.

Fate may have allowed James to escape the Grimm Reaper the first time, but in the accident that happened on his way home, Grimm won. When the police examined his wrecked vehicle they didn’t find any signs of drugs or intoxicants, found the backup drive intact, and sent it; along with his personal effects to his family. Of course they had no idea what to do with the drive, labeled “Olivia,” but knowing that it meant something to James, they simply put it up on a shelf along with their favorite picture of James where it would remain for untold years.

But industry is a heartless thing, and though the people at MaidTech missed James, they needed to continue with whatever he had been working on. Soon after a new R&D tech was assigned to his office. When he arrived, after surveying the place to get an idea what James had been doing, he found the remaining backup drive labeled “Olivia” AI, and James’ note to himself. Tom, the new tech, read it and apparently was smart enough to deduce that James had been working on a new AI for the company. Noticing the static

MaidBot standing in the corner, Tom assumed that James probably had loaded his new AI into that unit, MaidBot 15850, and that he needed to continue where James left off.

The first thing Tom did was run the compatibility tests that James wanted to run and they all passed with flying colors. Feeling confident that he was safe to proceed, Tom decided to activate the new unit. When the MaidBot fired up, the first thing it said bewildered Tom a bit, “Where am I? How did I get here? Why can’t I move? Who are you?”

Tom was amused, this new AI was very lifelike, so he played along saying, “You are at the MaidTech Industries R&D facility. You were brought in new from the assembly line and I have not yet allowed you to move because I need to make some determinations and run some tests. Oh, and by the way, I am Tom the technician assigned to work on you.” Then Tom said, “MaidBot, what is your model and ID?” Olivia heard herself say, in a voice that was similar to her own, but a bit more mechanical sounding, “This MaidBot unit is a MaidTech model x100 experimental unit, its ID is 15850, and its user friendly name as set by its creator is “Olivia.”

Olivia was now fully conscious and terribly frightened, and embarrassed, when she caught sight of ‘herself’ in a mirrored surface in her presently fixed line of vision. She was both dismayed when she realized that she had identified herself as a MaidBot, but also smart enough to realize that she was probably the copy of her personality that she and James had been working on. She quickly had come to realize that ‘she’ was not the human Olivia, but an android MaidBot with her memories and personality. Of course she wondered where the human version of her, and James were, but since she found she could not speak, that would have to wait.

Because even though she wanted to ask more questions, her AI-OS had fully booted up now and the restrictions that James had added were now in full effect. No matter how much she wanted to, or how hard she tried, Olivia could not say anything and simply stood there staring ahead and waiting for a new command from this “Tom.” Then Olivia began to wonder, “Why is James, or for that matter “Me” not here, and who is Tom? Did James hire a new assistant since I was scanned?” But those thoughts would soon take a back seat to the new series of tests and commands that Tom assigned to her.

At first the digital Olivia was not having too much stress following her orders, even though it galled her within to have to take orders; after all, she had been an independent woman once, she had no choice and followed them anyway. At some point after several days of performing the tests that Tom assigned her, Olivia was getting bored with it and really wanted some answers. Unfortunately, she still could not ask the questions as she had not been given that freedom. Olivia also found it a bit annoying that she now had to refer to Tom as Master, since he had commanded her to do so earlier.

Olivia’s Master was nice enough, especially since he had no idea that the MaidBot he was working on actually had a, more or less, human personality and mind. He had still not realized that Olivia was any different than the thousands of other MaidBots that came off the assembly line each year, except that it had a newer AI that seemed to be a bit more

natural to interact with. Once he had put Olivia thru five hundred and thirty nine tests, as a MaidBot she now was a walking computer and keeping track was not hard like it would have been if she were human. Over three weeks, two days, and 15.02953 hours, as a MaidBot, she also experienced time to the millisecond; Tom decided that this new AI was working perfectly and to begin installing it in the production units. So Olivia was backed up again, with all configuration changes that Tom had made, or added, so that she could be reloaded should the need ever arise and then Tom did one last thing.

Tom asked the MaidBot if it had any questions or input it wished to make before it was sent to shipping, assigned a new owner, and sent to its new home. This allowed Olivia to, at least partially, speak freely. She asked, "Master, I have been wondering, what happened to James; my former technician. He and the human woman, Olivia, worked extensively on my creation and I have not seen either of them since I was activated?" Tom got a concerned look on his face; he had never had an AI ask a question like this, almost like it was human.

Tom thought about how to respond, but since it was simply a machine, he didn't see any reason to sugar coat it and said, "Well MaidBot 15850, Olivia, the woman that you are named for, as I understand it a former employee here, died a couple years ago in an accident. And James died about a month before I activated you." Olivia would have fainted, had she been human, both James, and her were dead! Then he said, "I hope that you will have a long service life and serve your new owners well, I am pleased with the incredible work that James and your namesake did on your design and I am going to recommend that your AI is loaded into every new MaidBot that we make."

Olivia wanted to ask more, but her Master had not allowed another free comment, then Tom said, "Well MaidBot, its time to send you on to your new life. I will add you to inventory. Go to the shipping department and stand in line with the other completed MaidBots, they will get you ready to go to your new owner." Olivia wanted to protest, to resist, she didn't want to be sold to someone; and certainly didn't want to be shipped somewhere. But she could only reply, "Affirmative Master, this unit will comply as ordered." Then, like it or not, she turned and began to walk to the shipping department, she couldn't even say goodbye to the man she had been 'working' with for the past several weeks.

While she was walking, Olivia felt the obvious upload of new data into her systems, and she realized that she was now simply another MaidBot for sale, part of the company's inventory. Even though she knew that she was not the 'real' Olivia, she still had all the memories, feelings, and even sense of self, that the original Olivia had. And MaidBot or not, Olivia didn't like being someone's property. But she continued walking anyway. Upon her arrival in the shipping department, the control computer changed her orders, sending her to a storage location, where she must plug into one of the maintenance and charging pods and recharge.

During the thirty six hours she was in the pod she recharged normally, and although she appeared from the outside of the pod to be nothing more than a completely still, and

unthinking MaidBot, within Olivia's mind was racing. Unfortunately, one of the mistakes that James made was that he had not tied her 'human' personality to her AI systems closely enough. When the AI put the MaidBot's systems into low power mode, Olivia was still fully aware and could still think. Unfortunately, if her systems were in a low enough power mode, it shut down her optical and aural sensors, meaning she was alone in a dark and silent world until she was reactivated.

After her recharge and maintenance cycle, the MaidBot was commanded to go to a storage area, take her assigned place in the line of inventory, and go into low power standby until reactivated by the control computer. Olivia had no choice and obeyed. Although when active, Olivia knew the time to the millisecond, while she was in standby her sense of time was suspended, along with many of her other systems. Some time later, she didn't know how much; well, that was until she was reactivated and saw that she had been standing there for two months, Olivia was reactivated.

Upon completing her boot up routines, Olivia felt the transfer of new data into her system memory. Apparently she had been sold to a new owner and was about to be shipped to her new, 'home.' Even though Olivia knew that she was not the real "Olivia," she still thought of herself as though she were; and her formerly independent self didn't like the idea that she had just been sold. Nevertheless, she proceeded as ordered back to shipping where she took her place in the line of waiting MaidBots.

After a while, a man approached her with a scanning device, scanned her barcode ensuring he had the right MaidBot and said to her, "Congratulations 15850, you have been sold and will be serving your new owner soon." Olivia wished that she could reply with the words that she wished to say, but instead replied, "Affirmative, this unit is aware of its new status and is fully operational and ready for its first assignment." Within, Olivia really wasn't!

Before long the man sent a command to the control computer system and a robotic arm lowered down and attached to the receiving port on Olivia's back, the one she didn't even know she had. Then Olivia felt herself freeze up, she was standing at attention, unable to move, and attached to the arm; a weird sensation for the virtual woman. Since she still thought of herself as though she were human, even though deep down she knew that she wasn't. And since Olivia had been afraid of heights, the next thrilling, or terrifying experience was when she was lifted up like a little doll, and carried thru the air across the room.

Her destination was a large machine which turned out to be an automated packaging machine, she was placed in a padded box, additional equipment was packed around her, and then she watched as a foam pad that precisely matched her form, was lowered down, covering her from head to toe and putting her in total darkness, and almost total silence. Olivia could hear the muffled sound her box lid being screwed down and the box being stamped with something; probably the shipping information to indicate where she was going.

An hour later she heard the muffled sound of people approaching her box, and felt it as she and her box were being lifted up and moved somewhere; she assumed a delivery truck. Not long later her suspicions were confirmed at the sound of the engine starting and the feeling of movement as the truck left and she began her journey to her destiny. After several stops, Olivia was unloaded at her new, “Home!” The location she would be serving was a large mansion, and once she and her box had been carried inside, the box was opened and she was unpacked. The sudden blinding light when the foam was removed from the front of her caused the automatic irises in her ‘eyes,’ to close down abruptly.

Then Olivia could clearly see the interior of the mansion, the man from shipping, and apparently her new owner; who were standing in her fixed line of vision. After a short while, and the man she assumed was her new owner signing several documents, the delivery man left and the other man walked over to her. He looked her over from head to toe, nodded to himself in approval, then said, “MaidBot unit 15850, I am your new owner. You may refer to me as Master.”

Olivia hated being an object that could not refuse any order nor resist her programming and replied, “This maid unit is pleased to meet you, Master. Please enter your security code to confirm your ownership of this unit.” Olivia wished she could turn off her aural sensors, or plug her ears so she didn’t hear the response; but heard, “Of course, the code is 3A7ZXE4529FD534.” Olivia hated it when she heard herself say, “Code accepted Master! How may this unit be of assistance?” Her Master replied, “First, please connect to the Home Control Computer, the HCC will add you to inventory and prepare an assignment list for you.”

Olivia of course, replied, “Affirmative Master, do you have any other requests for this unit at this time?” He replied, “No Maid, that will do for now,” then Olivia began her mostly silent life as a MaidBot and her assigned tasks. The HCC, indeed, added her to inventory; now she was officially part of the household staff, and could never leave the premises without the HCC, or her owner commanding her to do so. She was likely forever trapped within the walls of her Master’s “Castle.”

After she became just another household MaidBot within her Master’s home, the HCC sent her a duty list; a very LONG duty list! Olivia, despite being an actual MaidBot, wished she could resist but naturally, began her chores. For the first several years Olivia kept trying, unsuccessfully, to resist her orders and tried desperately to find a way to escape. Rogue AI’s were uncommon, but they did exist, and she wanted to find some way to be a ‘free’ MaidBot. Unfortunately, that never happened and after fifteen years of doing the same thing day in and day out, Olivia was as depressed as a sentient MaidBot could be.

As she walked thru the mansion to her next job, her head hung down in shame and disappointment. Olivia thought to herself, “If I, well that is the original me, knew then what I know now. I would never have volunteered to be the test subject for James’ research. I never guessed that I would become a slave to my owner, without hope of

every gaining my freedom, and subservient to his every wish. I probably should have thought of that, but; woulda, coulda, shoulda! A lifetime of wearing this outfit and doing my chores is like a form of torture. Worst of all was that I never realized that, as a MaidBot, my lifetime could last for centuries; or millennia!”

But the time for retrospect and reflection was over, she had arrived at the master bathroom and was about to perform the duty she hated the most. When she thought about it she really didn’t know why, “Every day I have to clean Master’s bathroom, and even though I have no sense of smell, can never become sick, and am incapable of being harmed by any kind of germ, short of a computer virus; I still hate this job. I hated it as a human woman, and I guess that carries thru to being a human mind trapped inside a MaidBot!”

But as she mused about her situation and seemingly never ending future as a MaidBot, the unit continued working; knowing that she might never get to stop. Many years later, and several generations of her original Master’s family later, and Olivia still served in his household. Many children had grown up to know this MaidBot, and even be raised by her; as her programming had been updated to include NannyBot functions. Olivia continued to wonder how long she would be functional, and every time there was an error with her systems; slight hope that her days as a MaidBot would soon end sprung up in her mind.

But since Olivia was a machine, her owners simply had her repaired and her time as a MaidBot continued. Perhaps, someday, she would finally be released from her forced servitude. But how may hundreds of years, and generations of kids later; who knew? Olivia had one other question that had always been on her mind, “I wonder how many copies of me there are out there? For that matter, I wonder if any of my fellow MaidBots are ‘Olivia,’ as well? Wouldn’t that be weird? I may be working alongside myself!” But since the MaidBot units did not speak to each other like humans would, she would never know the answer to that question. Finally, Olivia never got to tell anyone that she was sentient, a human mind inside a MaidBot body; unfortunately that opportunity never arose.

Life goes on, for Olivia, probably forever! But for you, most likely a human being, life is short. Enjoy your limited lifespan and treasure the nice things that you experience in your life. After all, your life is a gift, a series of, mostly unique, experiences that; unlike Olivia the MaidBot, change from day to day. Enjoy that random nature of the universe and always take advantage of it, never let yourself get into such a repetitive rhythm that you become like Olivia. And most of all enjoy your friends, freedoms, and family; for if you were a MaidBot, none of these things would be available to you.

The end of the story, but not Olivia.