

19 October – 5 November 2011

Scan

Cassandra L.

‘So have you finished unpacking it yet?’

‘Yeah, I think so but she’s kinda frozen. Her eyes are stuck.’

‘Did you take the protective film off them first? It probably can’t see. Oh yeah, and just a hint – don’t call it “she”. It makes you sound attached.’

‘Oh, right ... hey look, it’s working – its eyes are moving now! She looks kind of frightened. I mean, it looks kind of frightened.’

‘Yeah, they do that at first. It’s just responding to the sudden rush of new stimuli. Did you get one with prebuilt history?’

‘I dunno, I don’t think so. I just sort of ordered her on a whim.’

‘Must be one of those cheaper new models they’re promoting pretty heavily at the moment. Where’d you get it? eBay?’

‘God no. Not eBay. Nah, I just saw this little app the other day that looked interesting so I downloaded it. Lets you design a companion yourself, sort of like designing an avatar or something but they make it and send it to you with a discount if you sign up five friends ...’

>connect local user filecloud
>run user analysis ...
>downloading basic user demographic data
>search history: image files: recently viewed: facial recognition=human
 >run analysis: tag relationship
 >run analysis photos: characteristics(eye colour)(skin colour)(hair colour)(body
 type) when pause time ≥0:00:03
>search browser history: pages clicked+search terms ...

‘Well, for what you paid it looks like they’ve done a decent job. The skin texture is a little harsh but the facial features and plasticity look pretty good. And nice body, too. Real nice body. What made you go with the gold?’

‘I dunno. It was the second option there on the list. I tried clicking through all the other skin tones but I just kept going back to it. It’s a great little app, actually. It’s like it knows exactly what you’re into – I only had to adjust a couple of things and I was done. But yeah, she is really quite metallic, isn’t she? I thought it was going to be more like a bronzy tan but the more I look at her the more I like it actually ...’

‘Hey, it’s your companion – I’m not judging – just saying it’s well-made. I guess time will tell whether the AI component is any good, it’s probably running its scans still. Is it fully functional?’

‘How do you mean?’

‘Have you spread her open and had a look yet?’

‘Oh, not yet ...’

‘Yeah, see – that’s how you can tell it’s a cheaper model. If you’d paid more you’d have got better anatomics but look, it’ll be fine ...’

‘What’s yours like? Fully functional too?’

‘Yeah, but I don’t really use it for that. Most people don’t after a while. I mean, it’s convenient if you’re desperate – it’s not like it’s ever going to get a headache or say no to anything – but it’s just not the same. The AI chip’s good, though. Mine sits on the couch and watches telly with me, asks how my day was, even laughs at jokes. It’s incredible – its eyes follow the action on the screen, just like a real person. Hell, even my girlfriend got a female one just for the company ...’

```
>run user analysis ...
>run purchase habit analysis: search purchase history
>search photos where tag=username; tag='me'
    >connect: external surveillance data
    >run facial recognition scan: main cameras major shopping complex=all
    >run facial recognition scan: main cameras street retail=all
>connect: food industry data: purchase trends for id 12004576963
>//AI override: script pause//
>//AI command: abort scan//
>Abort overridden by system: recommence scan ...
```

‘Are her eyes meant to be doing that? She looks like she’s fighting with herself or she’s sad or terrified or something ...’

‘It’s probably just still going through the scans and trying to read its new environment at the same time. That’s why you don’t get them on offer. Go through one of the established sites and you can get all the programming done before they send it out to you – some of them have been in business since around 2010 so they’re a bit more legit than the cheaper, newer brands. They’ll preload it a backstory and everything so when it turns up all it has to do is learn about its new surroundings.’

‘Yeah, I suppose. I was just thinking at the time how it’d be nice to have someone around the apartment and then I saw the ad pop up. It was more impulse than anything.’

‘Funny how these things always seem to know what you’re thinking, like when you’re on shuffle and your favourite song comes up next ... Anyway, what does it say in the user manual? Does it mention start up time?’

'Hang on, let me find it ... Alright, it says she'll take about an hour to boot then I have to talk to her for a bit so she can learn to react to my voice.'

'Yeah, that's pretty standard. You'll probably find you'll want to spend a fair bit of time with her at first but don't forget to talk to some real people once in a while, yeah? Anyway, I'll leave you to it. She'll try to identify with both of us and that'll just confuse her more.'

“Her”. You just said “her.”

'It, her, you know what I mean. I'll catch you later anyway. Good luck with it.'

'Thanks, I'll see you around ...'

```
>run user analysis ...
>run text analysis scan:
  >Scan SMS
  >Scan IM
  >Scan email
  >Scan SocMed (FB)(Twitter)(Blogs)(Comments)(Forums)
>run language analysis: find data for: (likes,dislikes,opinions,beliefs)
>//AI override: script pause//
>//AI command: abort scan//
>AI disconnect to system: attempt one
>//AI sys message: I DON'T WANT THIS//
>AI disconnect to system: attempt two
>Abort overridden by system: recommence scan
>//AI sys message: SHUT ME DOWN ...
```