

With one swift movement, he curled his knees up to his chest and thrust them toward the upper torso of the woman. His feet landed on her chest, shoving her backwards into a nearby booth. She quickly stood up and re-aimed her gun at him. Henri prepared for a painful jolt as she moved towards him. Just then, Henri saw a bright blue flash of light accompanied by the pop of an electro-static discharge--the kind that is emitted from a common stunner. The woman was knocked to the ground and lost her grip on her shotgun. It fired as it hit the ground, narrowly missing Henri. Despite the miss, he still wished he had been *just* missed by a less fatal weapon.

"Stunner," after all, was just a PR word, meant to make people feel better about the static electricity-based weapons being used by police instead of guns, which were outmoded decades earlier. Quickly, Henri's hand reached out and grabbed the shotgun. He then quickly turned his attention to the view through the glass display case as another bright blue flash caused him to squint. The view through the case allowed him to see another woman's body as it hit the floor. He could also make out a shadowy figure as it ducked a blast fired from Three's shotgun. Henri couldn't see where the figure had ducked to, but he could see a fourth blue pop of electrostatic energy fly through the air.

Henri heard the thump of the other woman's unconscious body as it hit the ground. He felt the counter move as someone bumped up against it. He waited for a moment, then rose and cocked the rifle simultaneously.

As he rose, he saw another person, this one a man in a black jumpsuit that enclosed a more muscular body than Henri's, or most men for that matter. The top of the suit was fashioned to look like a trench coat that slowly merged into his pants in one swooping motion. Henri noticed *only* the color of the clothing and decided that this man was with the others and could not be trusted. He touched the barrel of his shotgun to the rear of the black man's left-side-jaw-bone. This new person reacted quickly with one swift motion, touching the barrel of his stunner pistol to the underside of Henri's jaw.

Then, they recognized each other and smiled. "Tom!"

"Henri!" Lowering their weapons to the counter, they grabbed each other's right hands and hugged.

Tom was black, but had bright blonde hair, cut to a flattop. His face was ruggedly handsome. He was a kind of guy that just oozed with heroism. Tom was Henri's best friend. "Ya bastard! What the hell are you doing back here? And why didn't you call me first?"

Tom turned to face Mr. Nervous, who was at least unconscious if not actually dead. "I was tracking these three as a favor for a couple of friends. I have no idea what they wanted from this shmoe."

Tom placed his pistol on the counter and kneeled next to the man. He began frisking him as Ruby, the Samanthex-One Automated Waitress Robot, wandered out from the kitchen with a tray full of food. She stopped briefly, looking at the mess. Henri knew that if he didn't say something, she'd instantly call the police from her wireless. "That's okay Rube, we don't want to press charges."

Tom eyed the customer as Ruby went about her business. Automated waitresses weren't programmed to question authority and they *always* got your order right.

"Um, that chick there, well, I think it was that chick..." Henri eyed one of the unconscious women on the floor and realized that they were very close to being identical. "Or maybe it was that one? I don't know--but one of them pulled a letter out of that guy's pocket and I think she stuffed it down her shirt."

Tom smirked while continuing to search the customer. "Yuck. Why do they always stick it down their shirt?"

"What's wrong with that, dude?" Henri asked.

"He's unconscious--his personal shield overloaded and shocked him. He'll be all right."

Tom stood as Henri moved to the other side of the counter. "I guess I should call the cops, huh?"

"Yeah, might be a good idea, although--" Tom stopped, spinning around to see the woman called "Three" standing where she had fallen--she tapped a few buttons on the inside of her helmet. Suddenly the other women started squirming in obvious pain.