

Here's Looking at You, Kid

by

Emily Gallagher

Lieutenant Commander Data moved silently about his quarters, adjusting an impeccably straight painting, wiping an imaginary smudge from a table. At a wall in the inner room of the suite, he touched a panel, and a dressing table and mirror swung out. There were, of course, no toilet articles stored there. They were unnecessary. Data examined his reflection, turning his head from side to side, then moved a hand over his hair. There was no practical purpose for this that he could fathom, but Data had observed this behavior in his human companions and had added the ritual to his "preparation for receiving guests" program.

Tactile sensors along his lower left leg detected heat, a slight pressure, and friction caused by movement against his uniform.

"Hello, Spot," he said, and leaned down to pat the half-grown kitten who was rubbing his head against Data's pant leg. The young cat's scent glands, located near the temple region, had marked his clothing in the territorial manner common to the species. Spot had, in fact, marked much of Data's quarters in this fashion. Though the android was well aware of the cat's scent trails, he perceived that most visitors were incapable of detecting the odor, and so did not concern himself with it. He did, however, prevent Spot from marking territory in more pungent or unsightly ways. Urine spraying and furniture clawing were certainly discernible to humans, and these practices were discouraged. He picked the animal up and stroked him. While he was monitoring Spot's physiological responses to his attentions, the bell chime sounded.

"Enter." Data called.

The door slid back and CMO Katherine Pulaski stepped in. She was wearing a loose fitting white blouse trimmed with lace and a long flowing violet

skirt. Data stared openly, studying her with great interest. He had never seen her out of uniform before. She looked ... softer. Puzzled, he allowed her to stand in the doorway while he ran comparisons of other female officers he had seen in civilian clothes and rejected a series of descriptive adjectives until he came to a comment appropriate for this context.

"You cut quite an attractive figure for a woman well into middle age," he said, pleasantly.

She blinked. "Uh, thanks. So ... am I late?" she asked with forced brightness.

"Your arrival is three minutes and seventeen seconds past the time we had previously agreed upon. However, this is well within acceptable parameters of social behavior."

"Oh." Pulaski's eyes roved around the main room of his quarters. "Well, may I come in?"

"You *are* in, Doctor."

"It's just an expression." She walked appraisingly around the main room, as humans tended to do, taking in the touches of character in his Spartan (or so he had been told) quarters. She paused curiously at the covered canvas on his easel, but did not lift the cloth. She touched his violin, and frowned for a few moments in front of a Cubist-style portrait he had painted of Geordi La Forge. Then she sat stiffly on the sofa.

"You seem ill at ease, Doctor. Should I not have pointed out your tardiness?"

"I'm sorry - I'm - feeling kind of funny about this."

"This? You find this piece of furniture amusing? In what way?" he asked, intrigued. He approached the sofa.

"I didn't - oh, never mind. I should have known better ... this isn't going

too well, is it?"

Data dropped the cat into her lap.

"Ow!"

"It is a proven fact that humans find the caressing of a small mammal will ease tension and lower blood pressure. Perhaps you would find it soothing to pat Spot."

Pulaski looked at him with an unreadable expression, but she gamely gave the beast a few perfunctory pats.

"If I may, Doctor—" Seating himself, beside her, he moved her hand beneath the cat's chin. "Spot seems to prefer to be stroked here. Light medium pressure is best."

"Look, I know you mean well, Data, but I - er - don't like cats much. Sorry."

Smoothly, Data removed Spot and placed him on the floor. The cat raced into the next room like he had been sent for.

"Ah!" Data stepped up to the computer wall unit. "Would you care for a drink, my dahling? A nice sherry, perhaps?" he asked in a jaunty British accent.

Pulaski stopped brushing cat hair from her skirt and stared at him.

"Mr. Data, are you imitating Cary Grant?"

"Yes, Doctor," he replied in his normal voice. He handed her a glass of amber liquid. "I know that you are an aficionado of the films of the mid-twentieth century. Cary Grant is one of your favorite 'movie stars', I believe."

"He is indeed." She sipped the sherry and gestured toward her glass. "An excellent choice. Very tasty."

He nodded, drinking his.

"Have you actually seen a Cary Grant movie, Data?"

"Yes, Doctor. I am interested in the films on celluloid - movies - as well as the later forms such as feelies and holos."

"I had no idea anyone else on board had a liking for such an old art form."

"Several members of the crew do, in fact - Captain Picard, particularly. He has invited me to screenings on several occasions. He is a 'fan' of 1940's pulp fiction in the detective genre, and also enjoys films on the same subject. He is especially fond of Humphrey Bogart as

Philip Marlowe and Sam Spade." Data placed his fingers against her throat. "'I hope they do not hang you, precious, by that sweet neck,'" he quoted.

"Humphrey Bogart in 'The Maltese Falcon'," she marvelled. "My favorite Bogart movie is 'Casablanca'. Have you seen it?"

"I have. Warner Brothers, 1942 release. However, I do not fully comprehend the ramifications of the love triangle, or of the fiercely patriotic thread which runs through the film. Nor do I understand the tearful response it frequently generates in humans. However, I have found it to be very well written, and the events unfold and conclude in quite a logical manner."

Pulaski smiled into her glass. "Mr. Romance," she murmured.

"I also find the original black and white version more satisfying somehow, but I am at a loss to explain why."

"Perhaps because it's more authentic," she suggested.

"True. And obviously a black and white movie was the director's intention, since he had the option of filming in color."

"Undoubtedly."

An easy silence fell between them. After a few moments, Data set down his glass and took hers also.

"Let us not continue this charade any longer," he said softly.

"Whatever do you mean?"

He moved closer to her and placed an arm somewhat clumsily on the back of the sofa behind her.

"We both know why you are here ... darling."

"W-what?" She drew back.

"Oh, come now, Kate. Your saying that you wanted to examine me - what a transparent ruse that was. You are curious about me, though you pretend it is merely a scientific interest. You ask me all sorts of questions, seeking to draw me out even as you summarily dismiss me as machinery. But I know very well what it is that you truly want from me - and why you came here tonight."

"Data, are you quoting from another film? I don't recognize it."

The suave demeanor he had affected vanished.

"It is not from a specific source, rather, my adopted mannerisms are an amalgam of various movie actors' styles of seduction."

"Seduction!" She stared at him.

He regarded her seriously with those unsettling yellow eyes.

"Doctor Pulaski, you did say you wished to visit me in my quarters so that we could conduct an experiment. Is not Sick Bay a better equipped area for testing? You have arrived here without a medi-scanner or any other diagnostic equipment. Further, the time you suggested - 2100 hours - and your attire are both more appropriate for a rendezvous than for clinical observation. I may be only a soulless hunk of circuitry to you, but you must agree that I am no fool."

"You're right." She shrugged. "I guess I wasn't as clever as I thought. You've turned the tables on me. I had thought that I'd be the seducer. Yes, I did come here to get laid tonight. It seemed the easy way. With you there could be no ongoing involvement."

After accessing his language banks for the definition of the slang term "laid," Data responded firmly, "I am not a vibrator, Doctor."

"Nor are you a man, Mr. Data."

"This is true, but, if you desire sexual release without emotional involvement, could you not use the holodeck? Why attempt to draw me into such a callous subterfuge?"

"Callous subterfuge?" She shook her head. "You never cease to amaze me. All right, yes, I am curious about you. Very. And given the choice between an unpredictable adventure with you, and the preprogrammed compliance of a holodeck image, I'd much prefer you." Pulaski stood. "No matter. I do apologize, Data. It was unfair of me. I'll go now." She moved across the room.

"That is not necessary - Kate."

"What do you mean?" She paused near the door.

"I mean, I am amenable to the idea, although I must take exception to your method. This was my reason for setting a

Hollywood scenario into action. It was my intention to set you at ease by discussing a topic of your interest, and then by initiating an appropriate role playing program. I intended to allow the act to occur more naturally."

"You mean it's more 'natural' if you are the pursuer?" She folded her arms. "Now who's resorting to callous subterfuge?"

"I mean that neither of us should take the role of 'predator.' We should merely allow what we both wish to simply happen."

"What do we both wish? Then you are willing to...?"

"Yes."

"Why?" she demanded, suspiciously.

He shrugged. "Let us say that I am interested in conducting my own research." He opened his arms. "Come, kiss me Kate." He frowned. "Oh, that is Shakespeare. Would you prefer that I restrict myself solely to movie references?"

"Just be yourself, Data. This will be unsettling enough without your breaking into Cary Grant impersonations." She stepped into his embrace. One of his arms, and then the other folded stiffly about her. "Your programming—" she said, delicately. "You can - I mean, you've read adult literature? Seen movies? You - er - know what to do?"

"I am not a virgin, Doctor."

Her mouth opened, closed, and opened again. "I say again, you amaze me. But, I didn't mean to imply—"

"You presume that you have insulted me, bruised my 'male ego.' I have no feelings to injure, as you are so fond of pointing out. I am merely stating a fact. I have participated in coitus before. I know what you expect of me."

"Oh."

"Shall I kiss you now?"

He lowered his face to hers, but seemed momentarily nonplussed by nose placement, so helpfully, she brought her lips to his. His mouth was firm, but yielding, and had the tangy taste of the wine he had drunk. *Mmmm, the choreography threw him for a minute, but*

this part he's managing quite well, she thought, pleasantly surprised. Then the kiss ended and she opened her eyes.

"That was very nice, Data," she said.

The tentative look left his face. "It was satisfactory?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Kissing is something I have observed, but have not had much opportunity to practice."

"Well, they say practice makes perfect." Kate put a finger on his chin. "So, like Bogart and Bacall in 'The Big Sleep': 'You know how to whistle, don't you, Steve? You just put your lips together...'"

Their lips touched, but Data pulled back. "That quote is from 'To Have and Have Not'," he told her. "Although it was the same actors - Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Ba-"

She stopped him with her mouth and Data kissed her with great attention, his tongue swirling around hers, his hands strong and sure. Though the warm body pressing urgently against hers was undeniably male, Kate felt a rush of dizzying confusion. She knew that if she opened her eyes, she would see the familiar form of Data, the machine who would be man, but wrapped in his passionate embrace, she swore that he was alive and responsive. He felt like a man; my God, he even smelled like a man!

And when his fingers glided caressingly through her hair, she thought, distractedly, *Goosebumps?!? I'm getting goosebumps from a computer?* Then Data swept her up into his arms.

"May I carry you to the sofa?"

"You needn't ask permission for everything you do. Just do it. I'll tell you if you're wrong." She smiled at him. "So far, you've been extremely right."

"I am gratified that you think so." He crossed the room and set her carefully on the couch.

"Computer, subdued lighting," she ordered. "Now, Data, hold on a moment." Of course, having him stop was the last thing she wanted.

He dropped his arms and waited expressionlessly.

That unnerved her. After a kiss of such unmitigated passion that it had left her lightheaded and highly aroused - to see him just go *blank* like that reminded her most graphically of exactly who (no, *what*) she was with. *Get a hold of yourself, Katherine!* she thought fiercely.

"Why don't you tell me what kind of research it is that you wish to conduct. Let's be sure we both get what we desire out of this experience," she said with a casualness she did not feel. *Good. Talk to him for a minute. Buy yourself some time to settle down.*

"I wish to experience sex in a different way than my previous exposure. I want to experience it in a more 'romantic' way. In the sense that is evident in the Forties movies we discussed, for example." He considered briefly. "Somehow, there is a significance that surrounds the act that is beyond mere biological function, and even beyond the physiological responses. It piques my curiosity and I would like to try to capture some of that essence."

"That's a pretty tall order. How many times have you tried this?"

"There was one occasion prior to this one - of a purely physical nature."

"So, you've only done it one time?"

"That is *not* what I said."

She laughed. "Now, that sounds like male ego to me. Earlier you assured me you didn't possess such a thing. Remarkable. All right, then. One occasion, more than one act. Tell me what it was like for you. Omit the details; I'm not prying. What was your impression?"

His face took on a look of inward concentration that made her think he was running the entire "occasion" through his head. "Actually, it was ... it was rather devoid of feeling - on *both* sides. It was rough and hurried and mechanical, if I may use that word. However, this response was directly at odds with what Lieutenant ... what the lady had requested from me. Of course, she was not herself at the time. Perhaps on another occasion things would have been different, but there was not another opportunity. To answer your question, physically, it was quite complete, but it did not contain the beauty or the

mystery I had expected."

"No violins?" She smiled.

"No," he replied, sounding disappointed. It was not what I had thought it would be."

"It seldom is, even for humans, Data. Perhaps that's why all the folklore has grown up around the act. But I understand what you are saying. You have had sex, but now you wish to make love."

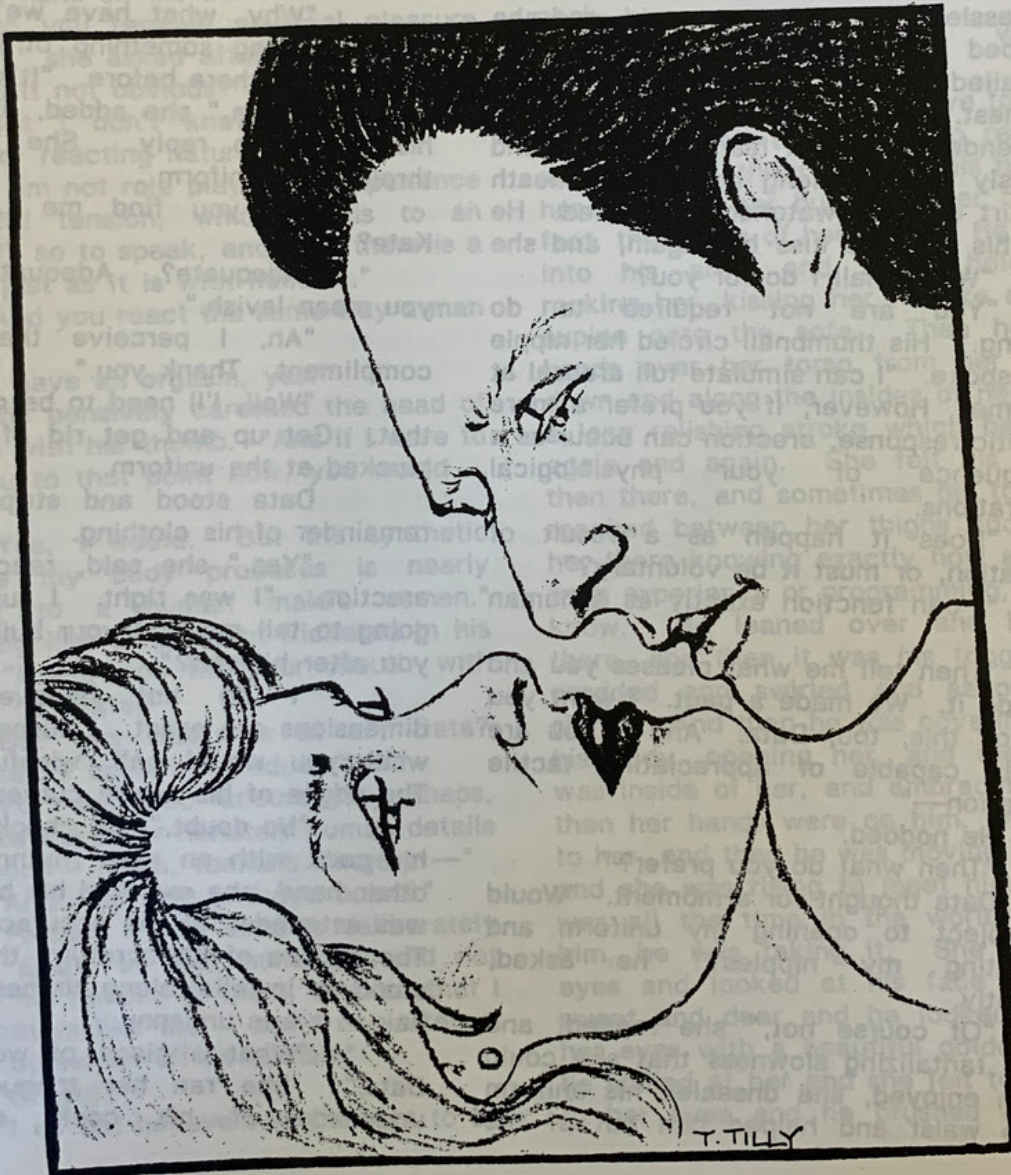
"Yes!" he said with such earnestness and longing in his voice that Kate felt her throat grow tight and she was seized with an overwhelming urge to cradle his head against her breast.

She reached for his hand and laced her fingers through his.

"All right, dear heart," she said, with great tenderness. "We shall make love."

"I am grateful that you are willing to try this with me. And please be assured, Kate, that I shall take extreme care not to injure you." Data gathered her into her arms.

And so touched was she by his simple honesty, that she truly did want it to be right for him. Could she project her feelings in a way that he could perceive, if not experience? However often she argued with him, she did feel a warm affection, albeit reluctantly, for him. Now she felt desire provoked by her own physical need, desire that had been fueled by his touch.



Yet, there was still that nagging impression through it all that somehow this was not real - because he was not real. But the lips on her throat were real. The hair she threaded through her fingers was real. But when she opened her eyes and saw that pale, slightly reflective skin and those peculiar empty yellow eyes, she was reminded that this was sensors and circuitry, and not a man, no matter how eerily accurate he appeared. And no matter how he was making her respond, physically.

"Do not think about it," he murmured against her ear as if he knew what she was thinking.

And so, for him, she roughly pushed the thought away.

Data fumbled with the tiny catch of her brassiere like any man would, and she unclipped it for him and removed it. His lips trailed over the lightly freckled skin of her chest. He tasted a pale pink nipple. The slender fingers of his left hand wound sinuously upward along her thigh beneath her skirt and she watched, entranced. He lifted his head to kiss her again, and she asked, "What shall I do for you?"

"You are not required to do anything." His thumbnail circled her nipple as he spoke. "I can simulate full arousal at any time. However, if you prefer a more aesthetic response, erection can occur as a consequence of your physiological ministrations."

"Does it happen as a result of stimulation, or must it be voluntary?"

"I can function exactly as a human male."

"Then tell me what pleases you and I will do it. We made a pact. I want you to enjoy this, too, Data. And if you are actually capable of appreciating tactile stimulation--"

He nodded.

"Then what do you prefer?"

Data thought for a moment. "Would you object to opening my uniform and stimulating my nipples?" he asked, hesitantly.

"Of course not," she replied, and with a tantalizing slowness that she could see he enjoyed, she unsealed his uniform to the waist and helped him out of the

sleeves. Her fingers traced over his shoulders and his arms, then she reached beneath his undershirt and made its removal part of a lingering caress. Her hands smoothed over his chest and stomach. Whoever had fashioned him had given him an average physique and that helped maintain the fantasy. Here was the body of an ordinary man, however pale. She found she liked it. Pulaski placed a series of little kisses along his collarbone, then playfully bit one nipple while her hand teased the other.

With a sharp intake of breath, Data said, "That is exactly what I had in mind."

She toyed with him for a time, then gradually let her hand drift over his stomach and into his lap.

"Why, what have we here?" she asked, finding something of interest that hadn't been there before. "It's a rhetorical question, Data," she added, as he opened his mouth to reply. She fondled him through the uniform.

"Do you find me ... adequate, Kate?"

"Adequate? Adequate? I think you mean lavish."

"Ah, I perceive that to be a compliment. Thank you."

"Well, I'll need to be certain about that. Get up and get rid of this." She plucked at the uniform.

Data stood and stripped off the remainder of his clothing.

"Yes," she said, reaching for his erection. "I was right. I suppose you're going to tell me that your builder modeled you after himself?"

"I do not believe that the dimensions are exact. I suspect that I am what you would call 'wishful thinking.'" The edges of his mouth curved up slyly.

"No doubt," she chuckled, stroking his cock with an easy rhythm. With her other hand, she explored his balls. Pulaski was astounded at the accuracy and detail. The texture of his scrotum, the veins that stood up in relief along his penis, his pubic hair - it was uncanny.

"What a piece of work you are, Data." She ran her tongue along the underside of his cock, tasting him.

"Michelangelo's 'David'."

"I - ahh - certainly do not have the physical attributes of that statue, Kate."

"Well, you're attractive enough."

"I am?" He sounded surprised - and pleased.

"Of course you are. Hasn't anyone ever told you that before? You're rather cute, Data."

"People frequently admire my design and my abilities, but you are the first to tell me that my features are pleasing to the eye Oh, Kate, kindly continue what you were doing."

She twirled her tongue around his glans.

"That?"

"Yesss...." He placed an encouraging hand on the back of her head.

"Do you receive physical pleasure from this?" she asked after a while.

"Is it not obvious?"

"But I don't know if you're role playing, or reacting naturally."

"I am not role playing. I experience a physical tension, which builds to an 'overload', so to speak, and then there is a release, just as it is with humans."

"And you react the same way a man would?"

"I have an orgasm, yes."

She pensively caressed the head of his penis with her thumb. "And if I were to bring you to that point now, you would ... come?"

"Yes, I would. But the synthetic ejaculate my body produces is nearly identical to a human male's semen." Something like amusement flickered in his face. "I will not fill your mouth with machine oil, Kate."

"But why ejaculate at all, Data? You certainly cannot reproduce."

"For aesthetic accuracy, perhaps, much like the other minutely human details of my body - pores, toenails, fingerpr—"

"And your skin and eye color?"

"Perhaps it was done to deliberately set me apart, so that humans could not mistake me for one of them. And so that I - and others like me - could not attempt to pass ourselves off as human."

"Others?"

"I do not believe I was meant to be

the only one of my kind. Kate, if you have no further questions...."

She put her mouth on him again. It was not long before Data's breathing grew ragged and he began to push against her. Briefly, she was frightened that he might lose control and hurt her, but then she felt the trembling tension in the hand twisting in her hair, and knew he was holding himself in check. He uttered a long, shuddering moan as he came, and she thought he said her name. She swallowed, and as he had said, it was the same. His left hand moved across her cheek tenderly.

"Thank you," he murmured.

Kate rose from the sofa and twined her arms around him. Data lowered his head and kissed the base of her neck.

"Darling," she whispered, smoothing his hair.

"Now I shall make love to you," he said, and knelt before her to remove the rest of her clothing. He ran his hands over her, stroking her buttocks, her calves, he feet, the backs of her knees. He lifted her into his arms and stood holding her, rocking her, kissing her, before easing her supine onto the sofa. Then he ran his hands over her torso from her shoulders down and along the insides of her thighs in a long relishing stroke which he repeated again and again. She felt his lips here, then there, and sometimes his tongue. He reached between her thighs and caressed her there knowing exactly how and where, from experience or programming, she didn't know. He leaned over and kissed her there, and then it was his tongue, and it prodded and swirled and savored. She sighed. And then he was covering her with his body, opening her, and then, oh, he was inside of her, and embracing her, and then her hands were on him, pressing him to her, and then he was moving against her and she was rising to meet him and there was all the time in the world, and bless him, he was taking it. She opened her eyes and looked at his face and it was sweet and dear and he looked down into her eyes with a beautiful golden light and he smiled at her and she felt tears burning in her eyes and he brushed them away,

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and she said, "I love you." Then the winding was growing tighter and tighter and then she cried out and he captured her hand that was fluttering in space and folded it into his hand and held it between them and it seemed he was whispering urgent words and his body tensed, and his head went back, and then his cheek was next to hers and then he wasn't part of her anymore, but he was still there and he whispered, "Sweet Kate."

* * *

She must have slept. She was lying curled on the sofa, her cheek resting cozily against Data's thigh. He was in uniform again. She was covered with a richly brocaded wine colored dressing gown. Pulaski sat up, drawing the robe about her.

"Hi," he said softly.

"Was I out long?" she asked, wiping at her eyes.

"Not long," he replied.

"This is beautiful." She touched the robe.

"I know how uncomfortable humans are about being in the altogether."

"Altogether?"

He frowned slightly. "I am certain I used the word correctly. It is slang. It means, 'in the nude.'"

She touched his shoulder. "You are correct in both word and deed, Data." She noticed a full wine glass on the table and reached for the sherry. In the next room there was a soft thud as the cat leaped from somewhere and onto the floor. Data was clearly waiting for her to speak: his anticipation was palpable.

"You realize 'I love you' was said in the heat of the moment—" she began.

He made a dismissive gesture with his hand.

"No. I want you to know that, in that moment, I did love you, Data. And I still feel enough affection for you to tell you something in perfect candor." She smiled ruefully. "Although the next time you and I wind up on opposite ends of a discussion - as we often do - I may contradict what I'm about to tell you." Pulaski reached for his hand. "Data, you

must not let anyone - and especially not me - treat you like an emotional inferior. You are not."

When she looked at him, she saw that his eyes didn't seem to bother her anymore. She could see a softness of expression around them, even if the eyes themselves still seemed mechanical. So, *it's changed me, then, this strange and wonderful night*, she thought. *I suppose tomorrow I'll wake up with a warm new regard for the transporter, too.*

"I'm going to be honest with you, Data. You are one of the most romantic and idealistic beings I have ever met. Truly. There's also a sense of poignant yearning about you that is very touching. It's not purely a cold-blooded quest for bytes of knowledge with you, is it? You paint, you make music, you experiment endlessly, trying to fathom things we take for granted, while we dismiss what you do as trivial and stand about being smugly amused at you. But I want you to know that I admire the hell out of you for trying so hard.... Perhaps though, you're better off not experiencing the depths of emotion that you aspire to. Access biographical data on the artists and philosophers you admire, and you'll find that they were not contented people. Despair, longing, loneliness ... these are more agonizing than the most horrific physical wound. And there's no regenerative medical tool that will mend a broken heart."

"But the misery is well-balanced. There is joy and love and compassion. There is the simple pleasure of a cool breeze in your hair, or the feeling of awe and mystery when gazing at the night sky."

"At least you understand the concepts. Many beings never even think about what you're speaking of. Perhaps your awareness is nearly the same as having the sensations. Do you think a Klingon would ever be moved to tears by the beauty of a rose?"

"It is not likely, Kate, anymore than it is likely that I will ever be."

"Never say never, Data. I think you've taken the first steps."

"I try so hard to fit in. Sometimes it is very frustrating."

"It is for humans, too."

"I have learned much this evening, and I thank you for that, Kate."

"I have learned much myself. And I have enjoyed it all."

"Did we truly make love?" He paused, then said hesitantly, "It seemed so to me."

"Yes, my dear. It was done with love. Just like in the movies."

He nodded thoughtfully.

"And now I must go." Pulaski rose from the sofa and gathered up her clothing.

"Please keep the robe. As a gift to remember this night."

"As if I could ever forget.... Thank you." She gave him a gentle kiss on the cheek.

"You are welcome."

"One more thing, Data. What happened here tonight is not a topic for discussion on the Bridge, or anywhere else. Do you understand?"

A shadow seemed to cross his features. "I understand. It never happened," he said in such a flat tone that she wanted to draw him to her.

"Oh, no, dear heart, that's not what I meant at all. It most certainly did happen. And it was magical. But this night is something special between you and me. It's a memory we have together to treasure, and it would damage it somehow if it becomes a topic of casual conversation. It's ours alone. Do you see what I mean?"

"I believe so."

Kate started for the door, the dressing gown whispering about her ankles.

"Ah!" he said behind her. "'We will always have Paris.'"

She turned, smiling. "Exactly, Data. 'We'll always have Paris.'"

He stared at her in amazement.

"I understand. It is romance!"

She touched her index finger to an imaginary hat brim at her forehead.

"Here's looking at you, kid," she said, fondly.

And Kate Pulaski's last view as the door slid

shut between them was Data standing with his left hand against his chest as he looked at her in wide-eyed and smiling wonder.

Well, isn't
that
SPECIAL?

