

Screensaver
By: RaddaRaem

“Turn up your damn volume.”

With a roll of his eyes, Rivet sank his thumb into the side of his phone. He watched with some satisfaction as the 'Media' bar plummeted down to nothing. The robotic visage on screen, modeled in the shape of reptilian synthetic, conjured up a pair of angry eyebrows upon its face plate.

“Very cute,” Rivet's guest mouthed out as his phone vibrated with a new text containing the self same message.

Flashing a toothy grin, Rivet bumped back up the volume as the synthetic face rearranged the pixels comprising its eyebrows. He watched as they flattened in response. “Thank you,” an artificial and feminine voice, dripping with frustration, crackled out from his speakers.

“It's my day off, Tera. I'm not in the mood.” Rivet stated as he leaned against the railing of his patio. The apathetic lion looked out over the neglected planters, more weeds than anything at this point, that filled them.

Tera's face smudged against the screen as the liquid crystals within went dull. Almost as if the synthetic was on the verge of breaking out from her digital confines. “I swear this isn't a work thing!”

“Then why are you calling me on my work phone?” Rivet asked. Wind, dry and hot, whistled past the pajama clad lion while he gazed blankly at the city streets some twenty stories below.

The synthetic's expressive and pixelated eyes vanished in an instant. Faint dots, and blocky sweat drops, filled their place. “...Because I knew you'd answer.”

“Bye Tera.”

“No no no no no no no wait!” the robotic reptile pleaded.

“Byyyyyyye.” As Rivet moved to pap his thumb against the End Call button... he growled as Tera nudged it out of place with her snout and off onto another screen. “Tera!”

“Just hear me out, please!” Tera begged as she locked the lion's screen. The synthetic's pleas, and occasional curses, were cut off as she was forced to bob and weave out of the way as the lion impotently slid a padded thumb across the now inaccessible device.

A disgusted sigh tumbled free from Rivet's maw. He responded by wandering back inside and planting his phone face down upon his kitchen counter.

“Fine, be that way!” Tera's muffled voice shouted back. “I'll just burn up your battery then!”

“Good. The sooner our call cuts out the better.”

“H-h-hey!” The synthetic harrumphed. “Yeah! Well! I'll... uh... umm... ooh.”

“Ooh?”

“Nothing.”

Rivet rolled his eyes. His padded soles clapped loudly against the tiled floor as he moseyed about his kitchen and noisily prepared a belated brunch. “Going to have to do better than vague threats to get a rise out of me,” Rivet snipped back while he stood before his fridge.

“Specific it is!” Tera taunted with barely restrained glee. “Why Rivet... is this a personal messenger installed on your work phone? One most certainly not approved, if not explicitly forbidden, by IT?”

The lion choked and sputtered as the carton of juice he had brought up to his lips spilled all over him. His undershirt stained with bright and fruity colors, Rivet lunged for his phone and impotently tapped away at the still locked screen. His teeth bit down into his lips as he watched Tera's visage bump at what were supposed to have been well hidden and password protected applications.

“What to do what to do? Do I trawl through your conversation history? Do I grant it permission to synchronize with and import your contacts?” Tera nosed at the dead pixels that pocked the bottom of the screen and dragged up Rivet's Contacts list. Chin resting atop it she narrowed her pixelated gaze at the lion. “Then again where do I even begin with you? And your *ahem* risque icon.”

Tera's eyes contracted into flat lines as a devious smirk crept up along her visage. Alongside her, bubbling up from the liquid crystals that comprised the screen, a blurred out image was conjured. Pixel by pixel it came into focus.

Blood rushed to the lion's face as his puffed out cheeks turned a bright crimson.

“Kidding! I'm kidding!” Tera laughed as she knocked her chin against the Contact list and sent it retreating back into the void beneath the bottom of the screen. With a wink, a handful of slanted lines appearing along her face plate to convey a blush of her own, the synthetic banished the still loading image from their shared sight. “...You know I'd never do that, right?”

Rivet pinched at his forehead. “What do you want?”

Exclamation marks came to replace Tera's eyes as her voice rose in pitch. “I! Was wondering! Iffff you had any plans this afternoon?”

The lion cocked his brows as he brushed at his sopping wet undershirt. “...No? My staycations tend to be pretty uneventful.” Rivet pressed a clawed fingertip against the screen and pointedly booped Tera right on the snoot. “And I like to keep them that way.” He grunted when Tera forcefully nosed back at his padded digit.

“So you're saying your schedule is wide open?”

“That's not-”

“Perfect!” the synthetic chirped as the screen behind her seamlessly transitioned into an array of spreadsheet cells. Hurriedly, Tera nosed at and scrolled through Rivet's calendar. “See I just wrapped up

some work on the coast and I was hoping to-”

Rivet scrunched his lips and papped a finger against the synthetic's avatar. “Tera.”

“I'll swear as many times as I need to!” Tera pouted while her eyes contracted into greater and less than signs. “This isn't a work thing, honest!” The shading upon her cheeks subtly shifted to give off the impression she was puffing them out.

Nostrils flared, Rivet exhaled heavily before releasing his grip. He struggled to maintain his stony demeanor when confronted with the overly expressive, and over sized, eyes that now dominated Tera's face plate. “Everyone else already turned you down didn't they?” he thought to himself.

An invitation, marked for that very afternoon, popped up alongside Tera. The synthetic's eyes nervously bounced back and forth between the lion beyond the confines of the screen and the lonely cursor just begging to fill out the Start Time and End Time fields. “...Please?”

Rivet tucked his scruffy chin against his chest and swallowed a sigh. “Fine. What time were you thinking?”

Tera's entire face plate lit up as her beady eyes exploded into a technicolor fireworks display. Rivet's heart, in turn, caught in his throat when he watched the Start Time field promptly populate itself with a time stamp of now.

“OH MY GOD, TERA.”

“Be right there!” she excitedly declared.

Eyes gone wide, Rivet scowled at the non-existent heads up. With a growl the lion stumbled into his bedroom and hurriedly changed into some clean clothes. Phone chucked onto his bed, Tera snickered as she playfully pretended to nuzzle back into the bunched up bed sheets her window into the world lay propped up against. Her eyes happily traced the stream of rumpled undershirts, underwear, and pajamas sailing overhead as her most trusted technician hurriedly made himself presentable.

Thoom

THOOM

THOOOOOOOOOM

Lurching every which way within his bedroom, steadying himself against the door frame as he slid on his sandals, Rivet struggled to steady himself in the sudden wake of the rhythmic and intensifying tremors.

“Ready when you are!” Tera shouted as Rivet's apartment suddenly went dark. A blackened wall of plastic, its interior suddenly flaring to life with hundreds of tiny blue LEDs, manifested outside the lion's abode. Methodically the lights within dimmed themselves one by one until the unmistakable outline of an eye, pixelated and all-seeing, filled Rivet's window.

Letting slip a disgusted groan, Rivet plucked up his phone before meandering out onto his patio.

Tera's hardware platform, her body proper, filled the streets below. Its cumbersome and colossal form, molded in the figure of a robotic reptile layered thick with artificial muscle, spilled beyond the periphery of his vision.

“Well? What are you waiting for!” Tera's voice rumbled from between the lion's fingers. Her digitized visage giddily, if not impatiently, bobbed and bounced along to urge him onward.

The lion grumbled under his breath. It would never not annoy him how Tera, courtesy of her software, could manifest her mind upon multiple platforms at once. Even on his days off, and especially when she was supposed to be hard at work halfway across town, the synthetic always found the time to beam her consciousness to his phone and, in her words, multi-task with ease.

“Ho-ho-hold on there!” Tera gasped through the phone speakers as her digital avatar caught sight of the uninspiring amount of life left in what was, for all intents and purposes, her microphone and very voice. Her eyes reshaped themselves into drained batteries to emphasize her point. “Charger! Don't forget your charger!” the synthetic's digital, and physical, forms implored in their own spoken and unspoken ways.

Shaking his head, Rivet dutifully complied. Power bank in hand and phone charging, the lion pointedly poked and booped at Tera's smarting snoot while he kicked the sliding door shut behind him. “And whose fault is it that it got so low in the first place?” Rivet snorted.

The enormous set of eyes before him flickered. An exaggerated animation, that of an eye roll, filled Tera's physical face plate in response. “Sue me,” crackled her voice over the phone's speakers.

Rivet came to rest his arms upon the railing as an incredulous look plastered itself upon his mug at the unfortunate choice of words. “Tera, the... the Commonwealth did. Rather successfully might I add.” Those billboard filling eyes squinted at him in response.

“Can we not bring that up?” she mumbled. “Still can't believe they made me patch out my vocal chords as part of the settlement.”

A wry laugh escaped Rivet's lips. He had warned her not to install those aftermarket modifications. Repeatedly, even. At least his hearing, most of it anyway, had returned after her sonic boom of a salutation on that fateful day. “It was that or you find a way to cough up seven figures,” he teased.

The synthetic, a towering mass and mess of artificial muscle and unpronounceable polymer plates, shifted in place. Her broad feet and massive toes unconsciously spread apart, per her programming, to minimize the pressure they applied to the streets below. “I found a way around it all the same!” Tera's mobile avatar haughtily huffed. Her physical platform, massive and mute, taunted Rivet with a blep. “Aaaaaanyway,” she coughed. “You ready?” Tera asked as her body proper cupped a gargantuan hand up to Rivet's patio and eagerly awaited his consent.

“No use in dragging this out,” Rivet sighed. “Besides. You're blocking traffic,” he noted of the steady stream of electric vehicles and bikes queuing up behind her broad and blocky heels. Rolling his shoulders, the lion vaulted over the railing and into the contours of his colossal coworker's palm.

“Oop! Oooooone last thing before we go,” Tera shyly whistled while a pronounced buzz

emanated from Rivet's phone.

Brow cocked, he glanced down at the screen filling pop up.

DOES THE OPERATOR CONSENT TO THIS HARDWARE PLATFORM ENABLING HAPTIC FEEDBACK?

YES

YES

Rivet wordlessly agreed with a roll of his eyes. Rumbles, muted and in tune to the gait of the synthetic's steps, coursed through him as an ecstatic squeal echoed out from his phone. The broad plane of plastic that was Tera's palm promptly bubbled and in turn its hard shell melted away. Within a matter of moments its surface became supple and smooth to the touch as it came to perfectly replicate the sensation and feel of tried and true flesh and blood. Scales, to be precise.

"I saw that spike in your body temperature," Tera cooed as her digital, and physical, selves blushed in sync.

"S-shut up," Rivet stammered as the creases of the synthetic's palm molded around him. The lion blushing particularly bright when Tera saw fit to recreate, if not emphasize, the sensation of being lost in the wrinkles of a great reptilian hand. Pinched in her hulking hardware's grasp, Rivet in turn cupped Tera's software self in his own. "So. Where to?"

"You'll see!" the synthetic coyly replied. An emphatic smile spread wide across Tera's multiple mugs as she simultaneously peered down at and looked up to Rivet.

"...What?" the lion dared to ask as he looked back to the massive, and sky filling, face that beamed down at him. Try as he might he couldn't help but grin back at Tera as she experimented with ever more expressive LED configurations to convey even the most minute changes in her mood.

"Nothing! This is... this is nice, is all," she quietly trailed off as her mobile manifestation rubbed her cheek affectionately against a padded finger that lingered against the screen. "We don't get to hang out much is all. Outside of work, I mean."

"You all but live in here," the lion tsked while he grudgingly stroked his thumb back against her avatar. "We hang out plenty." Leaning back into Tera's palm, he peered through her splayed open fingers to gaze upon the skyline.

Loathe as Rivet was to admit it... seeing the city from such great heights never got old. Scorched rooftops adorned with rusted and hopelessly obsolete air conditioning units. Communal gardens tucked away above the hustle and bustle. Unmarked cafes and eateries that popped up and were torn down in the blink of an eye. Then beyond it all lay the coast. Its rocky shoreline and shimmering surf blending together where the sea met the sky.

Rivet squinted at the barely visible silhouettes of the offshore turbines that blemished the horizon. "Come to think of it... Tera?" the lion asked as he forced his thoughts to drift away from the drudgery of work. He bounced about in place as Tera's measured footfalls, stuttering here and there as she heeded traffic and daintily stepped over intersections, shook him to the bone. Even with all of the precautions, care, and kinetic dampeners she put in place the titanic synthetic's most inconsequential of

actions were anything but gentle.

“Hmm?” her artificial voice asked through his muffled speakers.

The lion gently shook his phone up at Tera's mega massive maw. “Why are you so insistent on all but squatting in here anyway?” he asked as he pointedly tapped at and dragged her avatar by the snoot across the screen. “I really don't see the appeal. Not when you've got...” Rivet gestured towards the encroaching coast and view to die for. “This.”

Tera's boundless body shrugged. The contraction and release of her artificial muscles were accompanied by the whirr of countless hydraulic presses. “This is normal to me. It gets, you know, samey after a while. This is special to you and well...” Her avatar shyly looked away. “This, right here, is special to me.”

Rivet hummed thoughtfully. Scratching at his chin, he watched as Tera incessantly advanced towards the ocean. The synthetic forced to side step and carefully scooch along the older, and narrower, streets so as to avoid transforming the sky scrapers into paycheck busting thigh scrapers.

“...Thanks again for sharing as much as you do,” Tera quietly acknowledged. “It makes me happy. Getting to see, getting to know, what it's like to live like you do.”

“Course,” Rivet answered with a subdued but playful boop against his screen. His posture went slack as he allowed the silence between them to linger. He... he really was the only one that gave her the time of day, huh? Then again, given her model and make, it was little wonder that his other coworkers treated Tera as a little more than a glorified and anthropomorphized piece of construction equipment. She was what the hard hats fed longitude and latitude coordinates into for their deliveries. What the architects plugged gods knows how many calculations into so she could conduct controlled demolitions with ease. What the engineers tasked with tirelessly crashing against the ocean itself, after coercing and strengthening her artificial muscles to withstand the pressure of countless tons of salt water bearing down on her, all so that she could build out the foundations and supports for the ever expanding wind farms bobbing along the waves. Whatever the job she was the right tool for it.

The lion exhaled heavily. Given how much time he spent alone with her, tending to and repairing the wear and tear she incurred from reshaping the city and seabed with her bare hands, Rivet had been the first, if only, person to ask how she was feeling as opposed to how she was performing. It was hardly any wonder she had clung to him ever since.

A sudden rumble against his palm snapped Rivet back to attention. Phone in hand he watched as, out of the corner of his eye, an unnamed window collapsed and minimized. Upon his Home screen Tera's avatar could be seen covertly nosing at the icon for his Maps application. “Can I help you?” he tutted.

Blocky beads of sweat lit up Tera's face plate while her eyes contracted into pixelated pinpricks. “N-nothing! I-I mean no. I. Erm.”

Rivet held a finger over the Maps icon. Ready and willing to launch it at a moment's notice.

Panicking, the synthetic sank her teeth into it and hurriedly devoured the evidence.

“Tera, why are you eating my shortcuts?”

“Don't worry!” the synthetic mumbled between mouthfuls. “I didn't uninstall it or nothin.”

Rivet flattened his brows while a warm, and salt stained, gust of air blew through the gaps in Tera's towering fingers. “Uh huh. Well, maps or no, I can tell you're making a beeline for the coast.”

“Nuh uh! You don't know that!” Brightly colored pixels spilled out from Tera's maw and all across the screen whenever she spoke.

The lion gestured at the obvious coming into view. “Tera, we both know your programming compels you to take the most efficient route possible to any given destination.”

“I. You. HMPH.” Tera huffed and puffed as her avatar indignantly bounced about on screen while her body proper swallowed Rivet up in between the wrinkles of her palm. “This is supposed to be a surprise!”

“Tera you're how many hundreds of feet tall and wide? Subtlety never has been and never will be your forte,” the lion snarked as he wiggled free. “What? Planning for a relaxing seaside stroll? A wade in the shallows?”

“I said no hints!” Tera tutted as she turned up both of her snoots at him.

“...Wait.” Rivet squinted at the dreaded turbines slowly coming into focus on the horizon. The self same ones that the towering synthetic had just installed by hand and that he was slated to bring online in the coming days. “Tera.”

The avatar on screen eeped as she retreated behind one of the many icons that cluttered it.

“TERA.”

“It's -technically- not a work thing!” she weakly offered as her face plates, digital and real, adorned themselves with raised, and pixelated, eyebrows.

Rivet furiously shook his head, anything but amused with this presumed and roundabout call into work, as he started dialing down the 'Media' bar to Tera's consternation.

“Wait!” Tera protested as she delicately cupped her hands together and trapped the speck of a lion in the between them. “W-well. You see...” came the rapid fire texts that sent his phone buzzing. The synthetic's eyes swiveled across her face plate as her mental processing power was diverted from safely navigating the crowded streets to salvaging the situation at hand. Irritable honks, screeching tires, and heavily accented curses promptly assailed Tera's looming form. The colossal construction unit offered a mute and apologetic smile to those as she gingerly moseyed along.

Trapped between her palms in a massive plastic basin, the synthetic's curled fingers towering above him and darkening the very skies, Rivet's frumpy face was illuminated by the glow of his phone. “Well what?”

“Okay fine!” Tera fessed up as she pressed her nose against the interior of the screen and

strained the liquid crystals. Her eyebrows, tilted up, clicked back down in frustration. “I mean, if you really REALLY wanted to...” she mumbled as her eyes pressed at the sides of her face plate, “I guess. You could. Argue this is work adjacent,” she reluctantly trailed off as she mumble grumbled.

Brows pulled flat, the lion wordlessly responded by sliding aside the messages as fast as they came. “Can you not let me enjoy even one day off?” Rivet bitterly retorted. Wailing, Tera's eyes contracted into plus signs as wall after wall of text smacked against her avatar. “...Damn well better be paying me overtime and a half for this,” he cursed under his breath.

Tera's hulking visage rapidly cycled through increasingly irritated expressions. “I'm not. If you would just. WOULD YOU CUT THAT OUT?” the synthetic retorted as she irritably bumped back the all-caps text containing her most recent response. It crashed violently into the side of Rivet's phone, prompting the device to buzz and rumble wildly, as various settings tumbled down from the top of the screen. Sensing her opportunity Tera hurriedly nosed the 'Media' bar back to full volume. “Do you seriously not trust me?” Tera asked, her voice crackling with radio static, as beady tears of frustration collected beneath her eyes. “Here I am trying to get you to have fun for once and you're kicking and screaming the whole way! It'll be worth it, I promise!”

Rivet bunched his shoulders while Tera's incomprehensible body shuddered and creaked beneath him. “...Fine. Show me and be done with it,” the lion flatly followed up with a dismissive wave of his hand.

“You mean it?” Tera tapered off while a padded fingertip pressed against her pointed snout and brushed away the animated water works.

“Keep asking and I'm liable to change my mind.” Rivet sassed. The lion's ears perked to attention as a cacophony of horns, and colorful auditory exclamations, filtered in through Tera's parted fingers. His jaw hung slack at the realization the synthetic had all but come to a halt when he had hit her right in the feelings. “...We're making a scene aren't we?”

“Lil bit. Lotta bit,” Tera's avatar said with a nervous laugh as her body proper looked over its shoulder. “We uh. We should um. We should proooooobably-”

“Go go go go go go go go go,” Rivet urged her along. He promptly face planted into her palm, and frantically jostled about, as the towering synthetic picked up the pace and fled the congested lines of traffic piling up behind her.

“You don't think they called the Commonwealth on us do you?” Tera worriedly asked as she waded into the depths. Plumes of sand and bubbles exploded to the water's briny surface with every step she took.

“Probably. Definitely,” Rivet sighed as he cupped his hands to his face. Flat on the his back, the lion nestled into the scale-like plane of plastic beneath him. “That's a problem for Future Rivet though,” he wryly laughed. Splaying apart his fingers he gazed up at the cloudless sky. His eyes lazily followed the seagulls crooning overhead while he drank in the warmth of the sun.

“Hrmp.” Tera's digital likeness, looking up at that shared sky, slid her blocky and rectangular

eyes along the flattened lines that served as her brows.

“We'll deal with it when we deal with it,” Rivet tried to reassure her as he papped at the phone planted atop his chest. “Besides. We've got more than enough to occupy ourselves with in the here and now. Like whatever it was you were so damn insistent on keeping under wraps from me.”

Tera's hardware platform bashfully took to scratching at its cheek with her free hand.

Tilting his head back, Rivet scowled at the underside of Tera's chin.

“It's something I'd rather show than tell you is all,” the synthetic's voice shyly crackled over the speakers as she tucked her chin against her chest. “I think you'll like it! I hope you do.”

Eyes clenched shut, Rivet opted not to press the matter further. For the moment he contented himself with the hiss of the white capped waves crashing against Tera's thighs and little else. Not the errant rumbles coursing through his chest. Nor the fact they came courtesy of Tera bashfully burying her digitized face into his bosom.

In silence the duo enjoyed one another's company. Only once the wail of the seagulls and the roar of the waves was joined by the whirr and hum of generators did Rivet rouse himself from his would be cat nap. His shoulders slouched and teeth grit together at the sight that greeted him.

“Don't you start,” Tera tutted as turbines that rivaled her gargantuan self in size came into view. “Do you notice anything... different about this one?”

Pulling himself up into a sitting position, legs crossed beneath him, Rivet groggily regarded the metal obelisk adorned with blades immediately before them. “It isn't online yet?” he mumbled to himself. The thought of boating out here come the end of the long weekend and ascending its dizzying heights filled him with dread. Climbing rung after rung, the polished metal burning through his gloves, all while the azure abyss below threatened to swallow him up without a trace wasn't exactly all that appealing.

“Besides that!” Tera whined. She oopsed, and blushed madly, as her eyes expanded into hollow circles when Rivet's phone tumbled into his lap.

The lion squinted while he leaned forward. He hummed at a curious splash of color at the base of the structure. Whatever it was fluttered and flapped in the wind as it peeked out from the opposite side of the turbine.

“Getting warmer!” Tera cooed. “...As am I,” she quietly whewed to herself as she found herself looking up at the lion from between his denim clad thighs.

“Hey hey hey!” Rivet acked as he chucked Tera, and his overheating phone, out of his smoldering lap. “What are you even doing in there?”

“O-oh you know. Just. Stuff,” Tera whistled as she hurriedly forwarded to her physical platform, then deleted locally, a plethora of freshly taken photos.

“Uh huh,” the feline replied with his eyes half lidded. Even with the synthetic's ongoing

shenanigans his attention still found itself drawn towards the only hint afforded to him thus far. “You did something to the worksite I can gather that much,” Rivet mused aloud as he stroked at his chin.

Tera giggled as she watched him follow the bread crumbs she had laid out for him. “But whattttt?” she teased. Treading close to the turbine, the salt water reaching up a ways above her waist, the synthetic slowly circled round the structure to drag out the reveal.

Rivet cleared his throat in anticipation of forcing some enthusiasm. He had long since tempered his expectations and resigned himself to putting on as convincing a front as possible. That way, as the unexpectedly adorable faux beachside hideaway came into view, the lion could feasibly fake his shock and delight at the heartfelt surprise.

“Soooo...” Tera asked as the massive synthetic rubbed her free hand against the back of her head. “What do you think?”

The lion's lips quivered at the sight. A tiny sand filled platform, tethered to the base of the turbine, bobbed atop the waves. A beach umbrella stood tall at its center, anchored and rooted to the platform itself, as did a reclining chair caught in its shadow. “Where did you get all this?” Rivet asked.

“That's not what's important here,” Tera shamelessly deflected. “H-here! Try it out,” she gingerly implored as the synthetic lowered her upturned palm to sea level.

Phone in hand, Rivet flicked his tail as he cautiously approached. With a bit of a running start he made the leap from palm to platform as waves gently crested over Tera's fingers. Shuffling into the shade, grains of sand collecting beneath his sandaled soles, the lion settled down into the dubiously obtained furniture.

Tera's body slunk down beneath the waves as she came to rest her back against the turbine. Shoulder bumping against the platform she turned towards Rivet as a self-satisfied expression, consisting of raised caret symbols, lit up her face plate. “I thought that, you know, you could sneak in a little rest and relaxation the next time you got sent out here. You hardly get any time off as it is so I figured...”

An emphatic, and ecstatic, sigh slipped free from Rivet's lips while he slid down in the chair and gazed out at the unobstructed horizon. “I... I don't know what to say, Tera.” the lion said as he tenderly clasped his phone to his chest for the closest thing to a hug he could manage. “Thank you.”

Hands cupped to her cheeks, Tera's physical body jostled in place as delighted squeals filtered out of the speakers of Rivet's phone.

“That and...” Rivet arched his brows as he turned to Tera. “Please don't tell me where you 'found' these. Need to maintain some measure of plausible deniability after all.”

“It's a deal,” the synthetic laughed. “And... you're welcome.”

Nestling her head into side of the turbine's tower, Tera made herself as comfortable as she could manage. Her mute and massive form kept a watchful eye on Rivet as the small talk between them slowed to a crawl as did his breathing. The smell of salt on the breeze and the rhythmic sloshing of the waves lulled him to sleep in due time. Countless diagonal lines came to light up her sun kissed face

plate as her digital extension affectionately nuzzled into, and came to rest her head, against his bosom.

Arms stretched out over his head, Rivet stifled a mighty yawn as he lingered about his patio. “Night, Tera,” he sleepily waved to the towering synthetic after having been, quite literally, dropped off.

The mute colossus happily waved back, her face plate bathing the entire block in a pale glow, as twilight descended on the Commonwealth. Her thooming footfalls tapered off in intensity as her silhouette blended into skyline.

With a grunt Rivet kicked off his sandals before tossing the sliding doors open. Phone in hand he winced at just how many hours his still ongoing call with Tera had stretched into.

“I knew you'd like it!” Tera eeheed as her avatar's eyes contracted into greater and less than signs once more.

“Yeah, yeah,” Rivet sheepishly acknowledged. “That was fun. Should do this again sometime,” he smirked as he rubbed some sleep out of his eye.

The synthetic's digital likeness gasped.

“Snrrrk. Shock and awe, right? For now though I'm gonna call it a day,” Rivet rumbled as he hovered his thumb over the End Call button.

“Wait!” Tera gently pleaded as she nosed away the lion's digit. “One last thing!”

“What is it?” Rivet asked as annoyance crept back into his voice.

Tera's visage swiveled, motioned, and whispered for him to draw closer.

Rolling his eyes, Rivet obliged until his nose was all but smudged up against the screen. “Yes, Tera?”

BRZZZZT

A rumble and tinge of static laced Rivet's lips. Eyes gone wide, he watched as Tera pressed her nose against his own and snuck a smooch through the screen. Blinking, and blushing something fierce, he watched the synthetic pull away.

“S-so uhh... same time next week?” she shyly asked.

“Sure.” To Rivet's surprise the words came tumbling out of his mouth without even thinking.

Tera wordlessly nodded back, the delight on her face plate more than apparent, before she nosed at the End Call button. Her avatar promptly vanished.

“Well then...” Rivet thought aloud as he ran a hand through his hair and a smile, stupid and

sincere, spread wide along his face. “That just happened.”