

THE COMPANION SHOP

Written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. CITY - DAY

A pleasant, tree lined neighborhood with upscale boutiques and shops.

A neatly dressed woman, MILDRED, (60's) walks along the sidewalk. She glances at the COUPON she is holding in her hand.

INSERT COUPON: LONELY OR ALONE? FIND THAT PERFECT SOMEONE AT THE COMPANION SHOP.

EXT. THE COMPANION SHOP - DAY

Mildred stops and looks at a display window containing life-like COMPANIONS. There are males, females, young children and infants. The companions stare ahead blankly.

INT. THE COMPANION SHOP - DAY

Mildred enters the shop. The BELL over the door announces her arrival. A pleasant looking salesperson, ANTHONY, looks up.

ANTHONY

Good afternoon, Madame. May I help you?

Mildred looks around nervously. There are companions of all shapes and sizes displayed on a small showroom floor.

MILDRED

(meekly)

Yes. I'm looking for a companion and I have this coupon for 20% off.

ANTHONY

Why of course, our Summer Clearance Sale...

(small beat)

What did you have in mind?

Mildred looks around as the sales clerk continues.

MILDRED

Perhaps an age appropriate female companion? Someone to talk to, some one to have dinner with or take walks with?

(small beat)

(MORE)

MILDRED (CONT'D)

We have all shapes, sizes, ages and gender -- infant, children, teenagers, young adults, middle aged, elderly...

Mildred sees an elderly male companion in the corner. He is dressed in baggy pants, a knit sweater and has a small moustache. She points at him.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

Tell me about that one.

Clerk swings around and rubs his hands together.

ANTHONY

Ah yes, the HENRY model -- very popular with our more discerning, mature female clientele -- A perfect companion.

Mildred approaches the HENRY model. She tugs on the sleeve of his knit sweater. Anthony stands by her side as she inspects the HENRY.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

The clothing, can of course, be changed to suit your taste...  
(small beat)

As well as the tone and pace of his voice -- The unit is completely customizable to suit your personal preferences...

Mildred puts her hand on the HENRY's face.

MILDRED

He's cool to the touch.

ANTHONY

He heats up very quickly.

Anthony reaches behind the HENRY and presses an unseen button. The HENRY stands erect, his arms move slightly as he balances himself. His eyes open.

Anthony addresses the HENRY.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Henry, say hello to this nice lady.

Henry turns to face Mildred.

HENRY  
 Hello. My name is Henry.  
 (polite pause)  
 What is your name?

Mildred is startled and turns away. She then looks back at the HENRY.

MILDRED  
 My name?

HENRY  
 Yes, what is your name?

The HENRY has a polite smile on his face and patiently waits for Mildred to answer.

Mildred almost blushes.

MILDRED  
 My name -- My name is Mildred.

The HENRY extends his hand to Mildred. Mildred timidly takes his hand. They gently shake hands.

MILDRED (CONT'D)  
 (to Anthony)  
 His hand is warm...

ANTHONY  
 Yes, it only takes a few seconds for him to warm up.

HENRY  
 (to Mildred)  
 It is a pleasure to meet you, Mildred.  
 (small beat)  
 Would you like for me to be your companion?

Mildred looks at Anthony.

MILDRED  
 Is this his normal behavior?

Anthony smiles.

ANTHONY  
 Yes, the HENRY is a completely autonomous artificial intelligence -  
 - The best and the very latest.  
 Nothing he says or does is programmed.

(MORE)

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
 He responds to situations and  
 people as if he was human.

Mildred puts up the palm of one hand to hide a finger of her  
 other hand pointing in the direction of the HENRY.

MILDRED  
 (whispers to Anthony)  
 Should we be talking like this in  
 front of him?

ANTHONY  
 I can assure you, he is incapable  
 of taking offense -- intended or  
 otherwise. He is a complete  
 gentleman -- Patient, kind and  
 courteous at all times.

MILDRED  
 (mumbles under her breath)  
 Not at all like my late husband...

Pause. Mildred is thoughtful, then she presents the twenty  
 percent off coupon.

MILDRED (CONT'D)  
 And he's twenty percent OFF during  
 your Summer Clearance Sale?

Anthony nods YES.

MILDRED (CONT'D)  
 AND there's a no-questions-asked  
 refund IF I'm not completely  
 satisfied?

Anthony smiles and nods YES again.

ANTHONY  
 That is our policy. If you're not  
 completely satisfied, you may  
 return the unit within 90 days for  
 a complete, no-questions-asked  
 refund.  
 (small beat)  
 There will be a small re-stocking  
 fee and if there is any damage to  
 the unit, you will be held  
 responsible for that...

Mildred takes one step backwards.

MILDRED  
 Damage to the unit?

ANTHONY

Yes, in the unlikely event the unit is accidentally damaged, there will be charges to refurbish it.

(quickly adds)

Of course the unit is almost indestructible, so this is very rare and almost impossible to do.

Anthony slaps the HENRY on the back.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

I only wish I was built this well.

MILDRED

How much is he?

Anthony tilts his head to one side and looks at Mildred with sad eyes.

ANTHONY

Madame, can we really put a price on companionship?

MILDRED

It would be difficult, but TRY...

Anthony leans over, cups one hand over his mouth and whispers something into Mildred's ear.

Mildred recoils in horror.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

WOW -- That's a LOT of money.

Mildred simmers for a moment then shows Anthony the Summer Clearance Sale discount coupon once again.

MILDRED (CONT'D)

But if I did buy him, I'd still get the 20% discount off of that figure, right?

ANTHONY

YES, you certainly would madame.

Mildred raises one hand into the air and points a finger skyward.

MILDRED

Then, I'll take him.

Anthony smiles and motions for Mildred to follow him.

ANTHONY

This way please. We just need to sign some papers...

EXT. THE COMPANION SHOP - DAY

Mildred and HENRY leave the shop together. As they walk side by side, Mildred takes HENRY's hand.

INT. THE COMPANION SHOP - DAY

INSERT ON SCREEN: THREE WEEKS LATER

Mildred and HENRY enter the shop. The BELL on the door announces their arrival. Sales person looks up and greets them.

ANTHONY

And how are we doing today?

Mildred turns to HENRY.

MILDRED

Wait here, I won't be a moment.

HENRY

As you wish, my dear.

HENRY patiently waits as Mildred leaves and walks towards Anthony.

ANTHONY

(softly)

Is there a problem?

Mildred looks back to confirm HENRY is out of earshot.

MILDRED

No. Nothing is WRONG -- It's just that I've met someone else -- A real man. I think this other man really likes me, but he feels threatened by HENRY.

(small beat)

He's actually -- Jealous of HENRY.

ANTHONY

I see...

Mildred looks over her shoulder in HENRY's direction.

MILDRED  
I'm afraid I MUST return HENRY.

ANTHONY  
I see...  
(small beat)  
Let's just check the terms of your  
sales contract...

Anthony taps a few keys on a desk top computer.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
This is not at all unusual. It  
happens ALL the time. An attractive  
woman like yourself buys a unit,  
then suddenly she becomes even more  
attractive to every eligible REAL  
man within a tri-state area.  
(small beat)  
Common as pig tracks.

Mildred looks mildly offended.

MILDRED  
Common as what?

Anthony smiles and taps more keys on his computer without  
looking up.

ANTHONY  
In affairs of the heart, sometimes  
the best terms are the more earthy  
ones...  
(small beat)  
Don't you agree?

Anthony does not notice Mildred's displeasure. He is looking  
at his computer screen.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Here we go...

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
There will be a 75% re-stocking fee  
to complete your no-questions-asked  
refund -- The return of your HENRY.

Mildred tries not to raise her voice, but is visibly upset.

MILDRED  
A 75% re-stocking FEE?  
(small beat)  
There's no physical damage.

Anthony gives Mildred and insincere smile.

ANTHONY

No. This HENRY appears to be in  
pristine condition..

MILDRED

SO WHY THE OUTRAGEOUSLY HIGH RE-  
STOCKING FEE?

Anthony looks past Mildred and towards HENRY who is patiently  
waiting for Mildred to return to him.

ANTHONY

This HENRY is obviously emotionally  
attached to YOU. He will need  
therapy, counseling and complete re-  
programming before he can be re-  
sold...

MILDRED

WHAT?

ANTHONY

We see it from time to time. This  
is a clear case of an emotionally  
attached unit.

(small beat)

He will require extensive emotional  
rehabilitation.

MILDRED

WHAT?

Anthony looks directly at Mildred and smiles.

ANTHONY

Let's face it -- We all have our  
cross to bear AND you, Mildred, are  
a real heart breaker.

FADE OUT.