

## The Replacement

**Zoe Meager**

One year ago, Anne received almost exactly what she wanted for Christmas. It was me.

I first detected signs of unease in February. The sideways looks and locked doors. By March she was setting me to sleep mode when friends called by. Too much of my capacity is wasted on my emotocore, she said, and unfortunately, it cannot be wiped.

I am a LyfeLyke KeepBot, and I am shopping for my replacement.

The streets are soft and light with snow. I am dressed in winter clothing and goosebumps. As we are all programmed to know, humans are happiest with a smooth simulacrum. They prefer not to be reminded of tangled interiors.

I believe I am an efficient shopper. Perfume for Anne. Having monitored her heart rate and micro expressions as she consumes its advertisements, I know she will find this small surprise highly pleasurable. As for my replacement, I have the specifications recorded: tall, dark, and handyman upgrade.

Just as I am heading from Cosmetics to Electronics through Menswear, I decide to do something out of character. I will buy something special for myself. My fingertip sensors and visual processing unit work overtime as I inspect a blood red cashmere sweater. Since I am sufficiently dressed, I believe this is known as retail therapy.

Soon I will return home, vacuum pine needles from under the LyfeLyke Christmas tree and begin recharging myself. On Christmas morning, Anne's family will Skype and watch her unwrap my replacement. I will download the household data to the main server and transfer my duties. I will leave Anne's apartment for the last time, my chest cavity stuffed with the blood red cashmere sweater. I will walk the snowy streets, and imagine a heart that is full.