

Gabriella



# Gabriella

...‘till death do us part...maybe

**Carl Facciponte**

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## **Dedication**

This book is gratefully dedicated to my wife, Ellen, who put up with my nose buried in my ever-present lap while I pretended to be watching movies with her on TV. I appreciate your patience, understanding, and especially for you keeping the coffee flowing

A special thanks to all of my fellow authors who advised me on the tenants of the English language and who gently redirected me to safety when I wandered off the path.





To be human...

... does it require blood and bones?

Gabriella West is an android, but she's special. She lives on her own, she falls in love, and she even searches to find God.

But there's a catch: no one, except for her creators and the government, are aware she is a machine.

As she searches for a pathway that leads her to become more human, she finds something interesting.

And the revelation blows her mind.

When she was created, a switch was implanted in her, and its purpose isn't a good one. Can she discover the trigger before she gets shut down?

Will she be able to become "human" and find love, or will she be forced to comply with her main objective, and lose everything she treasures?

How thin IS the line between human and machine?



## Chapter 1

“Congratulations, everyone,” Jim said at the activation milestone ceremony. He lifted his champagne glass high. “It may be late winter outside, but the sun is shining warmly inside for us! We’ve completed the first stage of Project Lincoln! Ladies and gentlemen, Artificial Intelligence Concepts Incorporated, and this team of the best scientific minds in the field have made science fiction come alive! Today, science, technology, and life have changed forever. The world will never be the same from this point on.”

Jim paused for a moment. “And a big thanks to AI Concepts for turning the entire tenth floor of this Midtown Manhattan building into a stand-alone, state-of-the-art, secure research and prototype facility just for us. Salute!”

The joyful sound of clinking glasses filled the room. Cheers went up from the staff of engineers and technicians. Hands shook. High-fives slapped. Some people hugged. Gabriella stood next to Jim and raised her glass high to join in the toast.

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Two months earlier, Jim and Francine discussed the rewards a successful animation would bring. Jim whispered as he drew Francine close and felt her warmth. “If the animation of our android goes well over the next few weeks, there will be no shortage of project cash and some outrageous bonuses for us and our people. No one on the planet has ever done what we have. You and I need to have our own private party before the official one,” Jim said, winking. “Want to work late tonight?”

Jim Arnold was the clean-shaven, handsome, early middle-aged AI Lab Director. His Ph.D. in Advanced Artificial Intelligence and Biosystems earned him his directorship. The fifteen-year childless

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marriage to his wife, Alice, had cooled off over the five-year life of the project. Jim's job demanded long hours, but that wasn't the sole reason he was often late coming home to their small Park Terrace West apartment.

"Look at her," Jim said about Gabriella, who was lying on the animation table, all the while admiring Francine. Jim pulled Francine even closer to him as he allowed himself to become intoxicated by her perfume.

"It's beautiful," Francine said as she pressed her body into Jim, "and anatomically perfect in every detail, right down to small body hairs. The look. The feel. Everything. I love what the cosmetics engineering team did with her green eyes and curly honey-colored hair. But, Jimmy, there is no 'her.' It's only a machine." Francine smiled as she noticed the lingering trace of Jim's morning aftershave. She rocked her hip against him, promising future delights.

Jim smiled, "Unless someone attempts to monitor its vital signs, Gabriella will be indistinguishable from a living human being. We've done it, kiddo! Now, about that working late together thing..."

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Two weeks before the victory celebration, the Cray XC40 supercomputer downloaded the android's operational programming, activating Gabriella's other systems. Linguistic, scientific, and cultural data followed. Gabriella was 'born' a fully functioning adult. The engineering staff gathered around to observe the system initiation. One of the very few religious engineers at AI Concepts compared her to Eve, of Biblical fame. Unlike Eve, upon animation, Gabriella sat up on the lab table, looked over the spectators, and asked, "Why am I the only naked person in the room?"

"May I have some clothing, please?" she asked, the faint hint of an accent adding richness to her voice. Although her speech was flawless, the almost musical inflection suggested that English was not her native language.

"Jim," Francine whispered as her eyes widened in surprise, "she asked for clothes. Is that part of the programming or an unexpected bit of code cross-talk? She can't be reasoning on her own already, could she?"

## Gabriella

Are the silver strand nano-machines configuring on their own this soon?”

“I’m pretty surprised myself, Francine. I reviewed the programming specifications with the code designers only a month ago, and we didn’t predict this to happen yet. Sure, we designed her brain to self-adjust its nanowire configurations to mimic neuron functions in the human thought process, but we calculated it would take a longer time than this to kick in and produce results. This is intriguing.”

One of the young engineers brought a white lab coat for Gabriella. She slipped down from the table and put it on.

“Jim, why are you so surprised?” Gabriella asked in a low, calm voice which hinted of belonging to a cultured family. Her slightly olive-tinged skin would make one assume she was of Mediterranean descent. It would be easy to envision her sliding her long legs out of a limo and attending the opera with foreign friends or dignitaries.

“Your team designed me to think beyond my initial programming, and here I am, doing exactly that. Wasn’t it included in your design?”

The team turned to Jim for an answer.

Startled, Jim muttered, “Yes, yes. That’s aligned with our expectations. Good job, team.”

Recovering from the question, he continued, “Okay, gang, let’s recheck to see if there are any differences in Gabriella’s brain operation compared to the base systems programming data.”

Frank Wright, the president of AI’s Research and Development business unit, motioned Jim over to his side.

“Jim, I didn’t expect Gabriella to know she was naked and certainly didn’t expect her to ask for clothes. Was this part of the programming design?”

“Truthfully, Frank, no, it wasn’t. Beta versions of the brain didn’t show it would self-actualize this soon. I’m surprised, but consider it to be a bonus.”

“Well, I guess that’s good in this case. I’m uncomfortable when things we didn’t design for, happen. Keep me informed on any other surprises, okay?”

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There were no more surprises before the official activation ceremony. Gabriella's operational testing continued over the next three weeks. Speech, recall, cognitive ability, fine and gross motor skill tests were all passed as expected. A brain scan followed each successful completion.

"How did Gabriella's daily scan go this morning, Francine?" Jim asked on the morning of the ceremony.

"Pretty good. We mapped out her neural networks and found new ones are forming themselves at a rate exceeding initial projections. The Deep Base programming recognizes patterns effectively and is reforming her neural networks to simulate our brain functions. She is thinking as an enhanced human. Her internal systems are looking up data on the internet and including it in conversations with lab personnel. What a billion-dollar idea if we developed a chip and implanted into people to allow personal internet access! Yes, chip the planet," Francine said, "that would make us richer than God."

## Chapter 2

Lance Coopers wanted to be an army general since, well, since before he could remember. He grew up in the Liberty, Kentucky, countryside.

From the early age of six, Lance enjoyed war stories. He would crawl upon his father's lap and say, "Hey dad, can we watch an army movie?"

"Sure, son, I have just the one here. I'll make some popcorn, and we can cuddle up on the couch and watch it together."

It was watching those old World War II movies with his dad which first ignited a little boy's imagination to advance his troops into a noble battle. He and the other boys would play cops and robbers on sunny summer days. Lance, however, always took the role of a general deploying his troops against an entrenched, sinister enemy.

"Okay, men, let's storm that hill," Lance shouted as he led the latest charge up the treed hill in the town park. "Follow me!" was his impassioned cry as he raised his stick gun over his head and rushed headlong into victory after victory. He was General Lance, and it didn't matter at all to the boys that Lance was always leading the heroic charges. As long as they were fighting for a cause, the other details were insignificant to them. They were little boys running through the weeds and woods, fueled by imagination on carefree summer days.

On a cold March day marking his seventeenth birthday, Lance asked his parents for their signature on the DD-1966 form to allow him to join the Army with parental consent.

Lance's father was an air force retired Lieutenant Colonel from a three-generation line of air force men. "You mean air force, don't you, son?"

"No, sir, I mean army!" No matter the number of grand, if somewhat inflated, stories outlining how exciting a career in the air force could be, Lance set his face like flint to join the army and become a general.

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“Lance,” his father continued, “you’re only seventeen. Wait a couple of years, and let’s talk again.”

“Dad, I’m old enough to know what I want in life,” Lance shouted back, his arms flying into the air. “I’m not stupid, you know!”

“You’re not stupid, but there are things you still don’t understand. We’re trying to protect you from getting hurt, son,” his father said with the voice of a parent trying to save their child from making an unwise decision.

“I don’t need your help. I understand everything! You’re the ones that don’t understand. I’m asking you to trust me on this!”

“Don’t you dare raise your voice to me, young man! No, you are the one that doesn’t get it. You understand one hundred percent of what you understand, but you don’t realize it’s only about twenty percent of what you need to understand. You think you see it all, but you see almost nothing!”

“I’ve had it. You’re calling me stupid. I’m not! You don’t understand. To hell with this conversation! I’m going to Dot’s.”

“Hold on, son. Don’t go anywhere like this. Let’s talk more.”

It was too late. Lance marched out of the house as his father was still speaking. He bicycled towards Dot’s Pizza Palace on Old Middleborough Road. He hoped to run into some of his friends for comfort and companionship. They often met at Dot’s to discuss life plans, their favorite sports teams, and girls. The rustic, familiar place had become their unofficial headquarters.

“*Good. There’s no one sitting at my table,*” Lance slid into the booth in the corner by the kitchen. It was an old wooden booth whose solid wood seats had seen many high-level strategic meetings conducted by three generations of teenagers. Although the owners of Dot’s Pizza Palace had changed several times over the years, the interior had not. Lance smiled. Even after cleaning, it had a perpetual faint smell of sauce and pepperoni embedded into the wood.

None of his friends were there. Lance came for the comfort of being in ‘their’ special booth for a little while. He had seen his father retreat to the den when he was upset and wanted to get away from it all. Lance’s man cave smelled of pizza.



## Gabriella

The lone waitress walked to the booth, and in a very lackluster voice, asked if he wanted anything.

*This is exactly the type of person I don't want to become like. A zombie at work. I'll bet her parents didn't let her do what she wanted after high school either, and here she is.*

"Just a coke. No ice, please." He dismissed her with a wave of his arm.

"I can't see why they won't let me enlist," he spewed under his breath. "I'm old enough and ready for it. Why can't they trust me on this? What the hell!"

"Here's your soda," the waitress said, plopping the glass on the table as Josiah walked through the door.

Lance saw his friend and waved him over. "Hey," both boys said to each other in unison, "what's up?"

"I'm glad you could make it here, Lance. You're probably wondering why I called this meeting."

"Huh? What?"

"Nah, just screwing with your head, Lance. But if you fell for that, you must be into something heavy. What's up?"

"Parent crap again," Lance admitted. "I want to go into the army after graduation. They're against it. It doesn't make any sense to me."

"What do they want you to do, go to college?"

"Yeah. It's not that I'm so much against it, but I tried to explain if they let me enlist now, I can serve four years and then have the Army pay for my college anyhow. I'd save them a bucket full of money. They don't get it! It's so obvious I'm right."

"Hmm, see what you mean," Josiah answered in his best sage-like voice. "What are you going to do? Where do they want you to go?"

"Kentucky State, but I'm not ready. I don't know. Crap! Screwed in every direction. I can't enlist without their permission and don't want to go to college this fall. It would be great to take a year off and sort it all out, or at least until I get old enough to enlist by myself. Is that such a bad idea? Lots of people do it. Why do they have to pick on me all the time? It's like they don't think I'm old enough to make my own decisions,

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