

Man, Made to Order

Warning: This near-future romance contains explicit scenes that are hotter than an overclocked CPU in BeastMode, but it's all in the service of love. The language is fairly tame, considering.

Chapter 1. Arrival

My heart jumped when the door chime rang. “*Why am I being so silly?*” I thought. “*I ordered it. I shouldn't be nervous that it's here.*”

I took a couple of calming breaths as I crossed the foyer. The door slid silently open to reveal two delivery men on my terrace, lit by the diffuse glow of the light-transmitting Corestone walls that shielded my home from the upper Manhattan parkway. And behind them ... there it was. The crate. His crate.

The shoulder-high white box rolled smoothly across the fused glass floor in the entryway. Tingles of excitement travelled up my spine, and I rubbed away a sudden flash of gooseflesh on my arms.

“Do you want us to uncrate your merchandise, Ma'am?” one of the men asked.

“No, that's fine.” I touched a fingertip to the biometric pad he held out for me to sign, then shooed the pair out. Turning toward my box, I laid a hand over my quivering stomach and took a deep breath. As hard as I'd tried not to, I'd still fantasized about this day for months, gazing at the preview photos too often and too long. *Would the reality live up to the hype?*

I'd imagined myself tearing into the box in a frenzy of excitement, but now that he was here, I hesitated. What if I'd built it up too much in my mind? How could an artificial construct fulfill my desires? So many of my human lovers had been disappointments not only sexually but as companions. My mother said my standards were too high; my sister said I dated jerks. I was just sick of it. Sick of men who said they wanted a confident woman but clearly *didn't* once they

had one. Weary to the bone of men who were interested in my image, not in who I was. My last relationship had ended over a year ago and had been a total let down. I kept myself busy, but the nights were long and lonely.

So, I'd been an easy mark, a peach ripe for the picking, when the exclusive brochure popped up on my personal contact panel selling love, or a reasonable facsimile thereof. A man, made to order. Not a doll. Not a mere robot. But the latest advance in android artificial human technology. A perfect man—*my* perfect man—custom made for me and only me. I'd thought, *why not splurge on a Mr. Right Now, while I keep looking for Mr. Right?* It could be a romantic placeholder.

It had been expensive, costing more than my electric, self-driving luxury car, and was offered only to a very select clientele. But, satisfaction was guaranteed. I'd have to see about that.

"Enough of this," I said under my breath. It wasn't like me to be tentative. I see clearly and act decisively where others hesitate. I managed a successful company that employed almost five hundred people and I hadn't gotten where I was by being shy.

I took another deep breath as I reached for the pre-programmed palm-scanner on the side of the crate. My hand shook ever so slightly as the catches released and the side swung out.

And there he was, nestled in a plush interior of sensuous red velvet.

He looked so real. He sat in a relaxed pose on a bench built into the crate, his eyes closed as though he were napping. My body relaxed. I was relieved he wasn't activated yet. I needed a moment. I took in his tanned skin, the light brown hair streaked with gold that curled about his face and neck, the full sensuous lips set in a strong, handsome face. It was amazing. I glanced at his chest, expecting to see it rise and fall as he breathed. That's how perfect he seemed.

He was dressed in a luxurious deep-red shirt and stylish designer jeans with black boots. A warm, rich smell tinged with exotic spices and vetiver wafted from the box. On a leather thong around his neck, a pendant pulsed with an ethereal blue light. I reached out and touched it.

When he opened his eyes, the effect was magical. His gaze lifted to mine, and he smiled, deepening the illusion. I was used to the enigmatic Mona Lisa smiles that are commonly

plastered on most everyday artificials, but his smile was different. I was charmed and responded in kind.

“I had no idea you’d be so beautiful,” he said in a deep, musical voice.

I opened my mouth to reply and ... nothing. I couldn’t remember the last time I’d been at a loss for words. I stepped back as he rose gracefully to his feet and emerged from the box. I had specified a six-foot, two-inch model since I’m fairly tall. He stood at his full height looking down at me with eyes that evoked clear tropical seas. I stared back, fascinated. I could drown in those eyes. They narrowed with a subtle hint of mischief as his smile widened.

“Will you at least tell me my name?”

I laughed, partly with relief and partly with delight. He tilted his head, raising his eyebrows questioningly.

“I was thinking of Bryce.”

Bryce,” he said, trying it out. “I like it.” He winked. It was outright adorable.

I laughed again. No doubt about it, he was a quality product.

“I’m Leah. But of course, you know that.”

“Have you had time to answer the confidential questionnaire, Leah?” he asked, getting down to business.

“I have.” I nodded, unable to wipe the smile off my face.

“I can connect to it wirelessly over your network if you give me the password.”

“Of course. The password is ... rapture.”

He seemed to be studying me and the corners of his mouth lifted appreciatively. I assumed he was accessing the files, but his attention was having an effect anyway. The thrill in the pit of my stomach was a nice surprise. I studied him back, quite pleased with what I saw.

“This information will help me to understand you. I hope to be everything you desire.” He angled his head thoughtfully. “You seem to be a woman who does not suffer fools that waste her time. I like that.”

He reached out and took my hand gently in his. With his other hand he brushed a lock of my hair back from my forehead. *Could he feel its texture? How sensitive were his sensors?* I brushed his cheek with my fingertips. It was warm and soft. It felt like real skin, maybe even

better. Velvety and smooth with a hint of downy brown stubble scattered along his jawline. I ran my fingers through his smooth curls and down his arm.

He cupped the back of my head in his hand and pulled me toward him. He bent to kiss me. Any uncertainty I had melted away in that first kiss. My head swam as he filled my senses. The taste of him was wonderful. It was reminiscent of cinnamon and wine and sweet cream.

“I want you,” he whispered, his voice husky. At those words, something stirred inside me. Coals that I kept carefully banked in my daily life suddenly kindled into a warm glow. I relaxed into his embrace and buried my face in his wide chest. His scent was a wonderful mélange of spice and musk and whiskey, subtle and fiercely masculine. My controlled facade slipped away.

Why is this so easy? It had been impossible for me to let myself go like this with any of the men I’d dated. I’d always been distracted, trying to figure out what they might be thinking. With him, I didn’t have to wonder. A desire to try out my new toy seized me.

I slid my hands up under his silky shirt, feeling the soft texture of his skin over a firm underlying musculature. He felt real and yet strangely unreal, more like a virgin’s fantasy of a man than a real one. It was so different from what I’d expected. Strange, yet provocative.

His hands caressed my body, lighting up every nerve ending they touched. It was almost as if a faint electric current pulsed from them. *Did it? Could they do that?*

“Your skin is so soft, so lovely,” he said, a trace of awe in his voice. His hands cupped my breasts and his thumbs began to toy with my nipples. I drew in a sharp breath. His mouth found my throat and kissed my neck softly. Next, he nibbled playfully on my earlobe, his teeth around my fire ruby earring. Sparks of delight thrilled me inside.

A desperate passion surged inside of me. I unbuttoned his pants pushed them down. A perfect erect cock rose and Bryce pressed against me. The supple hardness against my stomach filled me with a violent longing. I needed to have him inside me.

“Leah.” His tone was low and sensual, almost a purr. My heart fluttered.

His hands pulled up my tight suit skirt and yanked down my silken panties. Cool air swept my pussy and I realized I was wet with excitement.

Is that music? I recognized a romantic song from one of my playlists but I couldn’t tell where it was coming from. My flesh was almost fevered as our bodies touched, slid together and

moved apart. The music rose in volume. Wrapped in his arms, it seemed to throb right through me.

“Fuck me now,” It was a request, almost a plea.

“*Mmm*, gladly.” He gripped my backside with firm, strong hands and lifted me effortlessly. I wrapped my legs around his hips. His member moved beneath me. The hard cock parted my outer lips and he rocked his hips to thrust deep into me. I gasped with the shock of penetration. It was an exquisite invasion, hot and urgent, perfectly matching the demand of my own desire.

He drove into me faster and harder, plunging his shaft deeper and deeper. His member seemed to swell and lengthen with each stroke, stretching me to the point of bursting. The delicious pain at the apex of every thrust was thrilling, euphoric.

As our bodies moved together in rhythm, a new feeling penetrated my awareness cutting through the haze of pleasure and the spice of pain. A twisting sensation, a vibration deep inside that caused my body to arch with ecstasy as the world seemed to fade away. I was no longer aware of the elegant foyer around us or the rich paneling and edgy modern art on my walls. My world became entirely, intensely, Bryce.

I floated in a sea of overwhelming ecstasy. Passion took me in its current. My climax started to build inside me, the warm ache cresting until it finally broke and surging pleasure rocked me to my core. I shuddered and bucked helplessly against him, his strong arms holding me fast. Too soon! It had happened so quickly. After waiting for him for so long, I'd been ready to pop.

Still connected, we slowly sank to the floor, the cool glass surface tempering the heat of my skin. I opened my eyes and gazed into his, fascinated by their azure depths and their soft, subtle glow. I was physically spent yet energized by the force of my orgasm. Bryce's handsome face looked down at me smiling that winning smile again; the countenance of a champion fresh from victory. I smiled back in utter, joyous defeat.

“That was amazing,” I marveled. He was no mere toy, but everything the brochure had claimed and more.

My own abandon shocked me. I'd never completely surrendered control before, never given myself up to a state of delirium like that. It was disorienting. *Why? What was so different?*

Realization washed over me. *I* was in control. I *owned* this amazing creation. I'd designed him, had him built especially for me. He existed for no one else. The freedom of that idea was ... intense.

Bryce's wink had a touch of wickedness. "That was merely an initial baseline. You haven't seen anything yet."