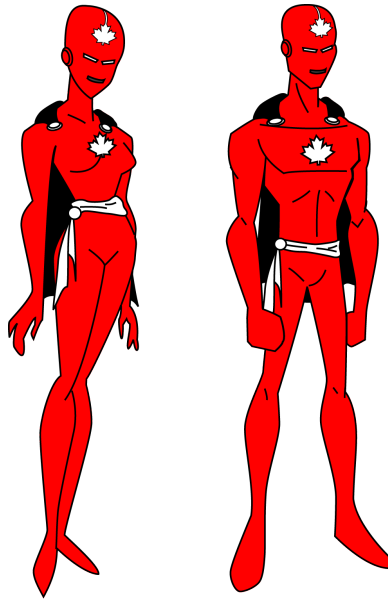


Canad-ARMED

Armoured Response Mechanized Emergency Detection



CANAD-ARMED

(ARMOURED RESPONSE MECHANIZED EMERGENCY DETECTION)

DESIGNATION - ARI

The young woman sat in the hallway, waiting patiently as her benefactor (one Donelda Stewart, CEO of Stewart Industries) held court in the office of the Ministry of Defense. Nikki Hargrove hadn't been to the Parliament Buildings before, at least not inside them. Here she was, at the young age of 22, about to submit a

proposal that would aid in search and rescue operations. A robotic design she'd made which would be able to defend against threats and rescue those who were trapped during disaster situations. Her hope, and the hope of her benefactor Mrs. Stewart, was to employ several of these androids for use by the Canadian Armed Forces, the Coast Guard, RCMP, STARS Medical Helicopter Service and other emergency response organizations. Plus, they could be loaned to countries known to be affected by natural disasters, where the androids could enter areas unsafe to humans.

Naturally, Nikki wanted to make certain that the androids could not be reprogrammed by unsavoury individuals, and that they could recognize threats and defend against them. The design was not made with offensive capabilities, but the androids had many subroutines which mimicked martial arts so they could use non-lethal force to defend themselves and others.

The prototype, which had decided to give itself the designation of Ari, sat beside Nikki on one of the vacant chairs in the hallway outside the office. Since Nikki had activated Ari's subroutines, the android had requested freedom of movement (this, coming after being fed the contents of Wikipedia, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the Bill of Rights, the Magna Carter, and various other documents concerning personal freedom). Nikki and Donelda agreed, finding that Ari already had it's own personality that was developing, even so far as to call Nikki and Donelda "mother".

If anyone had walked by, they might have taken a double take. Here was a young woman in a pair of dress slacks and a dress jacket over top of a pink and black striped Tee Shirt, with short, black hair and long bangs dyed pink. Beside her was the android, stripped down to it's basic anatomy, wires and gears exposed, an expressionless face plate which had a slot where a mouth would be and two more for eyes. Every once and a while, the android would look over at something, it's movements robotic, yet fluid enough to mimic human actions. Ari also had a curious nature.

"According to my research," the android would pipe up at random intervals. "This building has housed many famous individuals, including Prime Ministers of note, dignitaries of all walks of life, and even the Queen."

Nikki chuckled lightly at the remark. "That's right, Ari. You've been taking in a lot of historical research."

"I find it helps to learn of the world I exist in," the android would say as it looked to Nikki and nod with confirmation. A habit Ari picked up watching Donelda whenever she would make a confident statment. "Would you mind if I made a personal enquiry, Mother Nikki?" Nikki nodded with a smile, impressed that the education of polite mannerisms had taken so well with Ari's micro processing power. "When both you and Mother Donelda showed me your ... birth certificates, I noticed something quite unusual." Nikki felt she knew what was coming, but

indicated for Ari to continue. “Mother Donelda's gender designation was noted as female. Yours, however, was designated as male. Yet, you call yourself with the English uses of 'she', 'her' and even use the formal notation of 'Miss' when you sign documents. All of which point to female. I find this very confusing as it contradicts some of the reading I have done.”

“I'm a trans woman, Ari,” Nikki said without any hesitation before continuing to explain. “For several years I've been going through gender reassignment, becoming more of the person I felt inside. So that my outward appearance matches how I feel.”

Ari thought on this for a moment. “Is that common?”

“No,” Nikki replied with a small chuckle. “It's different for different people. Some will show their gender in a different manner than others. It's even different with how they like to call themselves.” She sighed and thought for a moment before continuing. “You know the binary system?”

“The binary system, a series of 1's and 0's which can be used to indicate many different things based on machine language, yet are commonly termed as 'on' and 'off',” Ari replied with a short dictionary answer.

“Sort of, but what I'm talking about is more like gender binary,” Nikki explained. “Gender binary means the usual definition of male and female. But there are those who don't live in that concept of gender, deciding to neither call themselves

either. For me, I've always felt I was a girl, even when I was a five year old boy. I'm not complete in my transition, but I'm closer to how I feel."

"And how you feel is important?"

"It is to me," Nikki smiled. "When we get back home, I can download some reading material into your micro-processor."

Again, Ari turned to face the door across the hallway, nodding a firm nod as Donelda would, indicating that it understood the concept. "I have noticed that you have designed many different chassis for me. Both to look male and female." Ari again turned to look at Nikki. "Am I to make a decision as to which I feel more comfortable with?"

"Well, you could," Nikki nodded as she sat back in her chair. "We thought a design that would fit all of your components comfortably would be a good idea. But if you want either form for aesthetics, I guess that's fine."

"Could I have both?" Ari asked, and then began to explain. "You have shown me schematic designs which would create an outer shell to house my components, and should one body become damaged I can merely transfer my conscious, memories, and back up data into a new body. I would like to have the decision to have either a male or female aesthetic, and make both types available for whichever ... binary I choose at the time."

"Okay, Ari. We can do that." Nikki smiled. She could see the excitement in Ari. Most wouldn't be able to, merely identifying

it as an android, emotionless and sterile. But Nikki could see it.

“I would also wish to have a maple leaf on the chest area and the forehead. And a design of a red body type, and one of a white body type.”

“I think we can add in morphigenic properties that would allow you to change your colour scheme as you like,” Nikki suggested. Ari thought on this for a moment and seemed quite pleased.

“I would like that very much, Mother Nikki,” Ari replied before making another request. “I would also like a small cape. Like Britannia's. I believe she appears very regal, if I am using the correct word.”

“I think that works,” Nikki said with a broad smile. Ari sometimes acted like a kid in a candy store.

“And a sash, such as Canadienne wears,” Ari added. “White would be preferable.” Again Nikki nodded. In a way, it was like having her own child. “And, if it is possible, I wish to have my vocal patterns for speech capability match the gender aesthetic I am in.”

“I'll make sure we do that,” Nikki replied with a nod.

“Do not make either voice pattern gruff,” Ari suggested. “I have noticed humans respond better to vocal patterns which are calm, soothing, and reassuring. Though, it might be best to have a sub-routine which allows me to change to a more authoritative pattern should the need arise.”

“That's actually a pretty good idea, Ari,” Nikki said as she pulled a tablet out of her purse. “I'll make note of that and work on it when we get back.”

“And, lastly, I wish to be called by the proper gender descriptors based on what body type I am currently housed in,” Ari said with a firm nod. “I would also no longer be referred to as 'it'.” Ari looked to Nikki. “The term is often used to describe inanimate objects, mindless machines, and so on. I am none of those.”

“What do you want to be called?”

“I would prefer the terms 'she' and 'her' when I am housed in a female chassis,” Ari said without hesitation. “And 'he' and 'him' when I am housed in a male chassis. For now, however, I would prefer gender neutral terminology.” Ari again looked to Nikki, almost with a pleading hope in the android's eyes. “I believe you would be best to instruct me what would be considered appropriate.”

Nikki smiled and sat up in her chair, placing an understanding hand on Ari's shoulder. “I'll try to lead you in the right direction. But in the end, you're gonna have to make the decision yourself.”