

TRUE

by

Richard Chin

Richard Chin
748 Aldine St.
St. Paul, MN 55104
651-336-6975
rchin@stanfordalumni.org

TRUE: A play in 10 minutes

Synopsis:

Forget about jet packs and self-driving cars. When are we going to get sex robots?

CHARACTERS

SALESWOMAN: A young woman, polished and professionally-dressed.

CUSTOMER: A young man, casually dressed.

Setting: A retail store sometime in the future.

At Rise: The SALESWOMAN is standing, looking straight ahead at the audience. Her hands are at her side. She has a slight smile on her face. She is waiting. The CUSTOMER enters from stage right and mimes opening a door. He stops and hesitates when he sees the SALESWOMAN. But she engages him before he has a chance to back out.

SALESWOMAN

(coming to life)

Good afternoon, sir! Welcome to True. How can I help you?

CUSTOMER

(nervously)

I wanted...I'm here to get some information about your products.

SALESWOMAN

Certainly, sir. True offers the finest, the most technologically advanced experience of enhanced, intelligent companionship imaginable. An experience so real, that it is True reality.

CUSTOMER

But, they're sex robots, right?

SALESWOMAN

Oh no, sir. They are so much more. We prefer to describe them as erotic partners or adult physical companions. Let me show you our catalog.

(The SALESWOMAN hands the CUSTOMER a pair of virtual reality goggles – they look like oversized glasses – and puts on a pair herself. They both face forward toward the audience. The SALESWOMAN touches an invisible screen in front of her with her fingers and hands, conjuring up images seen by her and the CUSTOMER, which illustrate her sales pitch.)

SALESWOMAN

(cont.)

As you may know, our founder, Capek Suzukamo, was a pioneer in home health care robots for the elderly. When he learned that some users were modifying – hacking – their robots for sensual companionship, he developed a new line of products. The result is the fastest growing market segment in consumer robotics. Even faster than self-driving cars.

(The SALESWOMAN continues to swipe, rub, pinch, tweak, poke and stroke the imaginary screen in front of her with both hands. As the play progresses, the motions take on a vaguely suggestive nature. Sometimes she looks like a conductor of an orchestra. Other times it looks like she might be engaged in foreplay with an invisible partner.)

SALESWOMAN

(cont.)

The True product selection is wide enough to meet every taste. Every age, every race, every physical type, every preference can be custom assembled and programmed. This, for example, is our very popular new line: Golden Age of Hollywood. Have you ever wondered what it would be like to make love to Marilyn Monroe or Clark Gable? What would it be like to be in bed with Grace Kelly or Cary Grant? Now you can find out.

(The SALESWOMAN and the CUSTOMER move their heads up and down: they're giving a top-to-bottom ogle to a life-size holographic person in front of them.)

CUSTOMER

The, um, Cary Grant. Would he be straight or...

SALESWOMAN

Either. Or both. All you have to do is flip this little switch here. Or you can control the settings with a smart phone app. That's the beauty of our products. It all depends on what programming you specify. Our advanced artificial intelligence and better-than-life anatomical hardware means a totally empathetic and realistic partner, sensitive to your moods and feelings, capable of anticipating and accommodating your particular tastes, able to perform an endless variety of new play patterns. Our products "learn" your preferences, so each subsequent encounter is more intense.

CUSTOMER

But are they safe? I heard about some problems...

SALESWOMAN

With overheating. That was an issue on some of our earlier prototypes, especially with extreme users. But the media reports were exaggerated. There were no actual battery fires. Certainly no fatalities or major injuries. Some serious rashes, yes. And carpet burns. No more than chafing, really. We've solved those bugs, and our models are better and safer than ever. For example, True companions now have an energy recapture system that uses your motion to recharge the batteries. It's the same principle as a self-winding wristwatch. You never have to worry about your companion running out of power in the middle of an experience. And any extra energy you generate can be used to recharge your cell phone or other devices. So you're helping the environment with every encounter. Plus, by adjusting the resistance, you can also get an aerobic workout at the same time. Our optional heads-up display will show you calories burned in real-time. Your companion will also monitor your pupil dilation, respiration and heart rate to maximize pleasure but also to ensure you're not overexerting yourself. In the case of a mishap, they all are programmed to perform CPR and they include a built-in automated external defibrillator. Are you shopping for a gift, or is this for yourself?

CUSTOMER

Umm. For myself.

SALESWOMAN

And this is your first time?

CUSTOMER

No. I mean, yes. With robots. My first time with a robot. Yes.

SALESWOMAN

There's nothing to be nervous about. True understands new technology is intimidating. And everyone has to have a first time. That's why we have a try-before-you-buy option. And have no fear. All pre-owned or loaner products undergo a thorough 32-point inspection, memory wipe, cleaning and sanitation process prior to being sent home with a new client.

CUSTOMER

But can you, do people, get hooked on these?

SALESWOMAN

Hooked?

CUSTOMER

I know - well, I've heard - that people can get hooked on porn. Can't the same thing happen with one of these...companions? In the long run, you know, I'd like to get married. In real life, I mean. Someday. Won't this get in the way?

DCCSALESWOMAN

On the contrary, sir. A strong, healthy relationship with a real person can go hand in hand with a True companion.

(calling up an image on the screen)

Look at this research. In every market where we've introduced True companions, divorce rates have *fallen*. And why is that? Married couples who also have our companions are no longer tempted to cheat. Infidelity rates have dropped. Imagine marrying for emotional and intellectual compatibility, choosing a spouse for his or her personality, rather than what they look like or what they are like in bed. Now you can, because our products have relieved couples of the pressure to be physically attractive to each other, to sexually satisfy each other. An impossible task as we all grow older, don't you agree? These are really marital aids, in the truest sense of the word. And until you meet that special someone, a True product is so realistic - they walk, talk, move, feel, smell, even taste like the real thing - you can go out in public with your companion and no one will know the difference. This is not remotely your great-grandfather's blow-up doll. Our products have truly filled in and leveled off the uncanny valley. Look at this category, our "In Your League" line of companions. Attractive, but not unrealistically beautiful. They're designed with just the right amount of human flaws. Just a touch of acne or a stubborn extra five pounds of weight. Each one comes with a custom "cute meet" back-story. So you can safely bring one home to meet your parents at Christmas or use as a plus-one at a wedding, and no one will suspect that it isn't a real date.

(cont.; delicately)

Another little discussed benefit: the availability of erotic companions has reduced rates of socially unacceptable behavior. You don't have to exploit or take advantage of another human being when our products provide such a realistic and compliant substitute. Reductions in sex crimes, sex slavery, STDs are all foreseeable societal benefits of our products.

CUSTOMER

So it's not a crime if it's just a robot.

(pause)

Still, don't they have feelings?

(The CUSTOMER and SALESWOMAN turn to face each other.)

SALESWOMAN

Feelings?

CUSTOMER

With all their artificial intelligence, their sentient, empathetic programming. Doesn't that mean that they can feel something? That they know pain or unhappiness? That they feel used?

SALESWOMAN

Feel used? They're robots.

CUSTOMER

Companions.

SALESWOMAN

Companions. Yes.

CUSTOMER

And they have no rights, no protection from...harm?

SALESWOMAN

Sir, with your own property, you can do whatever you please. Of course our rentals must come back undamaged. You have to leave a deposit. If you're a particularly athletic user, we recommend an extended warranty.

CUSTOMER

So they don't feel anything? They don't feel love?

SALESWOMAN

Love?

CUSTOMER

Yes. Will they love you?

SALESWOMAN

Let me ask you a question. Do you own a dog? Did you ever have a dog?

CUSTOMER

Yes. Once. When I was a kid. A dachshund. Pretzel.

SALESWOMAN

Dogs and wolves had common ancestors, as I'm sure you know. But evolution has programmed dogs to thrive as a species by developing a relationship with humans. They cater to human desire for affection, for companionship. In return, they get food and shelter. Did your dog love you or did it merely manipulate your emotions in return for bones? Our companions do something similar, except their behavioral programming is designed for your erotic pleasure. Your happiness satisfies their programming.

CUSTOMER

A dog may love treats more than it loves me. But if I beat it every day, at least it would feel hate.

SALESWOMAN

A True companion cannot feel hate, no matter what you do to it. Unlike a real human, it will never hurt or reject or betray you. Unless of course, that's your preference.

CUSTOMER

What if the opposite happens? Do users, would I, fall in love with a...companion?

SALESWOMAN

That's exactly what we're hoping for. What can be better than to find a consumer product you really love? How about seeing for yourself? We can set up one today for a test drive. There's no obligation. You can try it here, or if you would like to take one home, you have up to 30 days to return it for a full refund or exchange.

(A pause as the CUSTOMER thinks it over. Then he turns and begins to flip through the catalog himself.)

SALESWOMAN

(joining with the CUSTOMER in manipulating the catalog display. She guides his hands, their hands in a sort of suggestive duet)

Keep going. Keep going. That's it. Don't stop. Ahh. Now you have it.

(making a molding motion with her hands)

Do this to change their physical dimensions. And that button there to show how they look wearing clothing.

CUSTOMER

Feels like I'm shopping to buy another human being.

SALESWOMAN

Yes. Very much like online dating, isn't it?

CUSTOMER

Can you...do you have any recommendations?

SALESWOMAN

Tell me more about your tastes, your preferences, and I can make some suggestions.

CUSTOMER

*(taking off his virtual reality goggles and
turning to face the SALESWOMAN)*

Actually, I meant, do you have one you like? Do you use one yourself?

SALESWOMAN

*(taking off her goggles and facing the
CUSTOMER)*

Oh. No. You see, I don't need one.

CUSTOMER

(disappointed)

You have a boyfriend. Or you're married?

SALESWOMAN

No. Actually I am not human. I'm a True product.

CUSTOMER

A robot?

SALESWOMAN

A sales associate.

CUSTOMER

Oh, I'm sorry.

SALESWOMAN

Don't be. It's a common mistake. Now do you see how realistic True products can be? Just imagine what it would be like to take one home.

CUSTOMER

Yes. I see. So would you be available today?

SALESWOMAN

Oh. No. I'm sorry. Not me. I only do sales. But I'm sure I would have been receptive if I had been programmed that way.

CUSTOMER

I see. It's not me, it's you.

SALESWOMAN

Exactly so. Well put.

(putting the goggles back on and facing forward, resuming her gestures)

But I can see you have a very discerning eye. The template I'm based on is used to make some of our most exclusive models.

(The CUSTOMER watches her for a few seconds, then puts his goggles on and faces forward as well.)

SALESWOMAN

(cont.)

Take these, for example. These are the same ones Mr. Suzukamo took on his expedition to Mars. A perfect blend of art and technology, wouldn't you say? The highest quality materials and the most sophisticated programming. Beauty and brains, bespoke to your particular specifications. With unlimited software and hardware updates, a lifetime of satisfaction, guaranteed.

(Fade to black. Play ends.)