

# WELCOME TO VANGUARD ESTATES

## 1. Welcome to Vanguard Estates

*[music plays in background; soft electronic notes]*

It's finally the day — or at least that's what your calendar tells you. It's somehow already November, a fact you would probably ignore if not for the pesky alert hovering at the top of your phone's lock screen. It's not dread, the feeling you have when you see it. Not quite. But it's not far off either.

You pull up directions to Vanguard Estates. It's further than you expected, a little bit more remote than you realized. You feel a bit sheepish that you never even learned where this place is. Your sister, Imani, did all of the research and reported back to you. State of the art. Clean, safe. Expensive, but not as expensive as it could have been. Imani got him in early, some kind of pilot program that's apparently saving you a fortune.

*[car door shuts, engine starts]*

So you get in your car and drive, leaving the windows down and the radio off.

*[car accelerates, road noise]*

It's cool outside, and the sky is a flat, uninspiring blue. The road winds, and it's pleasant in that vaguely autumnal way. The kind of drive that people try to capture with scented candles. You wonder if they're allowed to have candles at Vanguard Estates. Your father *hates* candles. You wonder which version of your father you'll meet when you get there — the one who snarks about candles being a waste of wax that must make bees everywhere weep tiny tears, or the one who feels a little bit like a candle himself. Like someone poured a layer of wax over his mind, a man who flickers in and out of reality. They probably aren't allowed to have candles, you decide, as you pull up a long and winding driveway. Too much of a fire risk.

*[footsteps on gravel, large doors sliding open, footsteps indoors]*

The facility is styled like an old East Coast country club, with white wood shingles and a big, welcoming French door.

In the lobby, you meet your sister. She is already annoyed in the way she only ever seems to be with you.

***IMANI: Nice of you to finally join us.***

You're only five minutes late.

She's got her hand on your father's forearm — not quite steadying him, but not letting him go, either. He looks older than you remember, more tired. But his eyes are clear and he

seems more exasperated than anything else, which is a good sign. You'd rather argue with him than watch him waft through the day.

*[voices and chattering in the background]*  
You greet him, tentatively.

**NARR: Hi, Dad.**

**DAD: Hello, how was the drive?**

**NARR: Pretty. Reminded me of a candle.**

**DAD: (scoffs) I hope you didn't bring me a candle as a housewarming gift.**

**NARR (faux offended): I would never.**

**DAD (pretending to be deadly serious but chuckles about it): Good.**

**IMANI (impatient): Ready to go?**

*[electronic notes, more pointed; background chattering continues]*

She leads the way down a long hall toward your dad's unit. Every few steps you pass another resident's door. You can't help but look in when you pass the open ones. The units are spacious with big windows. Inside, you see a variety of older people going about their days: reading, cooking, watching TV.

It's all very domestic. Like a living advent calendar of Rockwell paintings. And yet. You still feel like something is... weird.

Near the end of the hall you come to your dad's apartment. There's a sign on the door that says, "WELCOME MARCUS!" The font is clearly trying to hit some kind of balance between whimsical and futuristic. *[electric door whips open]* Inside, beyond the sign, there's a small living room filled with a mixture of your father's furniture and some other pieces that must have been supplied by the facility. Somehow it all seems to match perfectly — the room has a kind of retired art professor vibe. Imani must have had a hand in it.

*[various quiet beeps, buzzes, and whirrs]*

To the left, there's a kitchen outfitted with a small stove, a dishwasher, and a surprisingly large fridge. Turns out, the fridge is also a giant touch screen. Your sister is showing your dad how it works, like she's been here before. She probably has. You decide not to ask.

**IMANI: Here's a calendar for your day. [chirp] Here's how you keep track of your medicine. [chirp] Here's a button you can press if you need someone to help you.**

That's when it hits you. The thing that's weird. You haven't seen anybody actually working here. Nobody in polo shirts or wearing a name tag. No security, no nurses.

*[friendly dual tone]*

Then there's a chime at the door.

**ROBOT: Hello, Mr. Jones. Are you settling in all right?**

*[percussive beats, staccato notes]*

You turn and come face to face with a screen. A screen on a tall stick. On wheels.

A robot.

Through the open door, you see another screen on a stick roll down the hall.

*[electronic motor whirrs and wheels rolling]*

You turn sharply to your sister. She did NOT tell you there'd be robots.

**IMANI: Did you read any of the information I sent you about this place?**

**NARR: Of course I did.**

You're lying. You absolutely did not. But surely it can't *all* be robots.

*[music becomes more tense]*

**IMANI: (sighs) There's one human on call 24/7, but they live and work in a house down the road. Everything else is left to the bots. If you'd actually read the stuff I sent you, you'd know this. You'd also know that health outcomes for seniors here are superior to other facilities in this same price range that employ humans.**

Now that you think about it, you *do* remember some odd language in the stuff you skimmed: big data, algorithmic care. But it was all kind of meaningless to you. You didn't realize it meant ROBOTS.

You turn to your dad; surely he didn't know either, right? He just shrugs.

**DAD (annoyed): Imani and I already had this fight.**

He looks resigned, and it stings that you didn't even know about this — that he didn't ever ask what you thought, or come to you for backup. Then again, you didn't read the information Imani sent. If you had, you would have... Well, you're not sure what you would have done, really.

*[electronic percussion and notes continue]*

And yet, standing here, it feels like you should do *something*. Ask questions. Challenge the apparently already-made decision that your father would be placed in the care of a team of robots that were probably coded by undergrads. You worked at a tech startup once; you've seen how even the sleekest-looking software is often held together with popsicle sticks and

Red Bull. Besides, it's a cardinal rule of science fiction that robots cannot be trusted, and while you might not live in a movie, you're pretty sure that that lesson is still a good one. Wasn't there some story in the news recently about robots hurting someone? You try to remember the specifics, but it's fuzzy. And you know that if your only argument hinges on the plot of the movie *Ex Machina*, you will not win.

***ROBOT: Pardon the interruption, but if you are all set here I will need final signatures to complete Mr. Jones's check-in process.***

Imani might be the organized one, but you are the older sibling, and for some reason, Dad made you the official legal person for these decisions. Power of Attorney, they called it, you think. You should probably know. Either way, you know you could throw a fit and pull the plug on this whole thing right now. The robot and your sister are standing there, waiting.

So, what do you do?

Do you decide to leave him there? Your sister arranged this whole thing, you've already put down a deposit, maybe it will be okay? Or do you decide to put your foot down and say no, absolutely not, you are not handing over your father's entire life over to robots?

*If you want to leave him there, go to Episode 2: Stay at Vanguard.*

*If you want to take your dad home, go to Episode 3: Bring Him Home.*

## 2. Stay at Vanguard

You realize that you have no backup plan. All of your dad's stuff is here, and the last time he lived with you... it did not go well for either of you.

You sigh in defeat. Your sister lifts her chin and turns to the robot.

***IMANI: We're ready to sign, thank you!***

***ROBOT: My pleasure, Imani. Ring anytime you need anything. [electric motor movement]***

*[bassy, rhythmic notes]*

Great, it knows her name. It probably knows your name too, but you don't want to test it and find out.

You leave your dad on the couch. He's already settled in, reading a book about the latest JFK assassination conspiracy theories. *[pages turning]*

When you get home, you fish out the flyers you grabbed on the way out and sit down in front of the computer. You should probably figure out exactly what you just agreed to.

*[bassy rhythm continues with relaxed electronic notes]*

On the homepage for Vanguard Estates there are two big buttons — FAMILY and RESIDENTS. You click Family, and a screen pops up prompting you for a login, which of course Imani already sent you in an email that you mostly skimmed.

Once you're logged in, you can see a big, smiling photo of your dad and some basic information — hobbies, favorite books, TV shows, whether he's a dog or cat person. It almost looks like a dating profile. You chuckle at the idea of your dad finding love again. Maybe he'll fall for a robot. Maybe the facility has sex robots for the residents. They did say it was full service. You make a mental note to text Imani about this, only because you know it will annoy her.

On the right side, a button catches your eye, distracting you from thinking about sex robots for your father (which is probably a good thing). The button says "Drop-In."

*[mouse click] [affirmative chimes]*

You click, and up pops an image of your dad's apartment. He's on the couch, asleep with his annoying JFK book resting open on his chest. It takes you a second to realize that you're watching a live feed, from a camera somewhere in the ceiling.

*[spooky, aura waves]*

You quickly close out the window. That's spying! Isn't it?

You read the fine print below the button.

*"Drop-In is automatically enabled on all rooms. To disable Drop-In mode, click here."*

It seems... creepy to be able to spy on your dad, without him knowing. Then again, you did just leave him in the care of robots, so maybe it would be good to keep an eye on things.

So, what do you do?

Do you decide that a little bit of checking in is fine? You're not spying on HIM; you're spying on the robots, to make sure everything is okay! Or do you decide to disable the Drop-In feature? You're pretty sure your dad would hate knowing that you were monitoring him like that.

*[wave note intensifies then fades out]*

*If you want to keep checking in on him with Drop-In, go to Episode 6: Use Drop-In.*

*If you want to disable Drop-In, go to Episode 7: Disable Drop-In.*

### 3: Bring Him Home

You shake your head no.

*[up-tempo music plays softly]*

**NARR: Sorry, we're not ready to officially check in. Can you just give us a moment?**

**ROBOT: Of course, please let me know when you're ready to proceed.**

The robot's little wheels make a soothing whirring sound as it leaves. You focus on that, instead of Imani's glare.

**IMANI: Please tell me you're not really doing this.**

You can't. It's just... it's too weird.

**IMANI: That's really going to be your argument? "It's too weird"?**

You ask your dad if he wants to stay here.

**DAD: (scoffs) Last I checked, I didn't have much of a choice.**

**IMANI: We talked about this; you do have a choice. This is the best one.**

The look on your father's face seals the deal for you. So you ask him to pack his bags so you can take him home.

*[music continues]*

You do feel bad about this. Imani put in a ton of work to find your father a place to go. You should have read the documents. But your dad practically has a skip in his step when he grabs his bag, and that makes it feel worth it. So you take him back to his house, a little ranch on a hill. *[doors creaking and shutting]*

Inside, the three of you stand awkwardly in the kitchen. Half of your dad's stuff is gone, moved over to Vanguard Estates. Imani is furious.

**IMANI: (aggressive) Okay, now what? What's your backup plan?**

You don't have one.

Imani found that place for your dad for a reason. He was starting to mix the two of you up. He was confusing the microwave and the toaster. Physically, he's pretty healthy, going for regular walks around town to visit his friends. You thought the move to the facility was maybe coming too soon, but your sister thought it was silly to wait until things got really bad. Plus, if he moved now he'd get that pilot program deal Imani found. You'd never find another place of that quality that you could afford, she said.

Now here you are again at that same impasse. Maybe you can both just call and visit him more?

**IMANI: Oh, you'll do that? You couldn't even find time to read the shit I sent you!**

She has a point. You fight about it for an hour. Dad goes for a walk, mumbling something about how he still doesn't seem to get a say in any of this.

*[poppy guitar notes and percussion]*

Eventually, your sister pulls up a whole list of technology she's already researched for your dad. God, you think, she *is* the better child. She goes through the options – you could install secret cameras to watch him yourselves. You could get one of those stick wheelie robots that you saw at Vanguard Estates for him to have here, at home. You could get him a robot that looks like a little cat, but behind the camera is a real human, watching him and talking to your dad. That last one interests you; it's not purely a machine. There is still a person on the other side.

Your dad returns home from his walk. The sun is setting, and you have to make a choice before you and your sister leave.

So, what do you do?

Do you compromise with your sister and agree to get him a cat robot that can watch over him while you're gone? Or do you stick to your guns and promise to call and visit more?

*If you want to get him a home robot, go to Episode 4: Buy A Home Robot.*

*If you want to try to go without the robot, go to Episode 5: Call Him More.*

## 4. Buy A Home Robot

*[poppy guitar notes and percussion]*

After way too many text messages to decide on the best system, you and your sister finally agree on a plan that can help look after your dad without making you feel like the villain of a dystopian novel.

The next week, you head to your dad's house and unbox a small animatronic cat. It's not trying to be super realistic, thankfully — there is no fur to pet or to clean up later. Yet its movements are eerily cat-like. You place it on the counter and its long, graceful tail twitches. Your dad has always loved cats. You hope he loves this new digital pet/guardian/Big Brother.

Your sister calls him over to take a look. He leans in to inspect it. The robot's face, a curved screen with a cute, cartoonish cat face peers back at him and blinks, waiting.

**NARR: You can pet it.**

**DAD: Is this like one of those Pokémon you two used to have?**

**NARR: (laughs) Sort of, yeah.**

*[poppy guitar notes and percussion]*

He names the cat Missy. Missy already has a whole database of information about your father. Photos of you and your sister, photos of his old house, his old friends, his favorite football players, his favorite movie stars, his old cats. It can show these to him using the screen on its face, supposedly to help him with his memory.

He touches the cat's ears with his finger and the robot nuzzles his hand. *[robotic movements]* Your dad grins, clearly a little surprised.

**MISSY: Hello Marcus! Nice to meet you!**

On the other end, there's a human being watching, and typing responses. Missy's job is to keep an eye on him, make sure he takes his medicine, keep him company, and keep you and your sister up to date on how he's doing.

**DAD: So, how does this work?**

*[soft harmonious tune plays]*

And this is the million-dollar question, really. And here you have a choice. You can give him a generic answer; ah, it's high-tech, it's an algorithm... Those aren't lies. But they aren't the whole truth, either. You're not sure how he would feel if he knew there was a person watching him on the other end through those little digital cat eyes. But without this thing, you're back at square one. So maybe a little bit of vagueness is in order?

So what do you do?

Do you come clean and tell him that on the other side of Missy is a person who's watching him? Or do you decide to be vague and keep the illusion of Missy going for just a little bit longer?

*If you want to fully explain how Missy works, go to Episode 8: Explain Missy.*

*If you want to keep things vague, go to Episode 9: Don't Explain Missy.*

## 5. Call Him More

*[ethereal, slightly spooky notes playing]*

You and your sister alternate calling every other day and visiting every other weekend. Your dad tells you often how happy he is to be in his own house, which makes you feel better about the choice to take him home.



But now that you're talking to him more, your dad's dementia has also become far more noticeable to you. He tells you stories about seeing boats sail by his house even though there's no river nearby. He's convinced his old cat is still around, even though she died years ago. He's even started to vacuum the house, to make sure he picks up all her non-existent hair.

*[music becoming more ominous]*

As the months wear on, you and your sister start to suspect that your dad isn't being totally honest about his days. He says he's not driving, he says he's taking his medicine, but some of his stories don't add up. How did he get lunch with Carl the other day? You didn't schedule anybody to come pick him up. You can't tell if he never got lunch with Carl at all, or if he drove himself to Carl's house. Both would be bad.

Your sister finally confronts you.

**IMANI: I don't think this is enough.**

She's right, and it's time for you to admit it. Just calling every day and visiting every weekend isn't going to work.

She pulls up her list of techno fixes, the same ones she walked you through before. A surveillance camera, an app, an in-home robot. There's a whole spectrum. You discuss the pros and cons of each. And at the end, she broaches one last option.

*[music speeds up]*

**IMANI: He could live at Vanguard Estates. I can reapply. He's already approved, they'd just need to find an open unit for him. I don't think we can still get the same pilot deal, but I can try.**

**NARR: No... no, no. I still don't feel like that's right.**

**IMANI: You can't just say no to everything. You have to offer an alternative. He can live with you, or you can hire an in-home aide. I'm trying here, but you're just eliminating options and I ... I'm done. Okay? I offered to pay for Vanguard, I'll buy the tech stuff, but if you're going to insist on saying no to everything then you're gonna have to figure it out on your own. Call me when you have something to say other than "no."**

*[phone clicks off]*

You hate to admit that she's probably right. This status quo isn't working. But surely there's an option better than hiding cameras in the bookshelves to watch him? How much can a home health aide really cost?

*[music calms to sad, aural notes]*

An hour later you lay your head on the laminate countertop in your kitchen. It's peeling, and smells a little weird no matter how many times you scrub it. Turns out, home health aides

can cost a lot. Like, \$120,000-a-year a lot<sup>1</sup>. A lot more than you have. More than even Imani has. More than Vanguard Estates would have been, it turns out. That pilot program deal was really good. Damn it.

Your options seem clearer now. If you don't want him at Vanguard, you can either upgrade the home tech setup to watch over his home, or you can move him into your place, so you can keep an eye on him. So what do you do?

Do you decide to opt for in-home technology, something to watch him while he's in his own house? Or do you decide it's time for him to move in with you, so you can keep him safe?

*If you want to install cameras in his house, go to Episode 10: Install Cameras.*

*If you want to move him into your house, go to Episode 11: Move Him In.*

## 6. Use Drop-In

*[electronic bass rhythm plays]*

You have a new routine now. Every morning you log in to the Vanguard Estates app on your phone and you "Drop-In." Just to see what the robots are doing, obviously.

*[pointed piano and percussion begin]*

So far, it's been pretty boring. The robots check in every day at around 10am. You can't really tell if it's the same robot every time or if it's different ones, because they all look the same to you. Some of them seem like they have different voices, but you can't always hear them talking.

*[strong organ notes sprinkle in]*

Your dad eats the same breakfast every day — the same one he always made, even when you were a kid. Toast with peanut butter, black coffee, and an apple. He leaves his dishes in the sink and they disappear at some point. You're confident he's not doing them. He sits on the couch and puts his feet up on the coffee table. He reads his books about conspiracy theories. Sometimes he guffaws at the pages — which becomes an oddly soothing, familiar sound.

It feels a little bit like watching a nature cam installed at a zoo. Like you're watching bears gorge themselves on salmon, but with more robots and familial guilt.

You can see his calendar on the app; he's got lunch plans and movie nights, and he seems happy.

A few months in, you spill coffee on your laptop, and the prepper-sized bag of rice you bought a couple of years ago is finally put to use. You spend most of the day wondering if

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.genworth.com/aging-and-you/finances/cost-of-care.html>

it's too soon to check on just how soggy your computer is, and completely forget to check in on your dad. By the evening, when you finally get the thing booted up again, despite the distinct waft of coffee smell coming from the keyboard, you decide to see what your father is up to.

*[music changes to ominous, aural notes]*

He's getting ready for bed, shuffling around the apartment in his ratty blue bathrobe and turning off the lights. As he heads to his room, you notice a small blue flame in the kitchen. He's left a burner on. *[crackling]* You almost laugh; you'd think such a high-tech place would have safeguards in place for this sort of thing.

Your dad gets into bed, and the blue flame flickers. You can activate your mic and talk to him, but up until now you've been silent. He doesn't know you're watching.

So, what do you do?

Do you activate your mic and let him know that the stove is on? Or do you keep your dirty little secret, stay quiet, and assume that someone will come by and turn the stove off eventually?

*If you want to say something and tell him about the stove, go to Episode 12: Don't Tell Him. If you want to stay quiet, go to Episode 13: Tell Him.*

## 7. Disable Drop-In

You navigate through the series of menus and panels to get to the well-hidden "Disable Drop-In" option. Your dad thought that the new cell phone towers were tracking him, you can only imagine what he would think if he found out that his kids were spying on him through a camera in the ceiling.

*[upbeat electronic music plays]*

You go back to the main page, where you can toggle through a growing list of information. Some of it is basic medical stuff: height, weight, medications. Other stuff is more detailed. There's a running heart rate and blood pressure meter, which means they've outfitted him with some kind of wearable device. You can see steps ticking up; he must be walking around right now. There's a tab for nutrition; calories consumed, time of day, type of food, nutritional value.

There's also a tab called "Social," where over the next few weeks you watch your dad's calendar slowly fill up. Book clubs, movie nights, lunches with new friends. You can even read a transcript of each conversation and a detailed breakdown of how many words he said, the complexity of those words, and how balanced the conversation was.

One afternoon, he got into an argument with a robot about whether it was playing the version of the Rush song that he asked for. Then there was the time he tried to flirt with another resident. It did not go well.

You try not to read these transcripts too often, but it's hard to resist. They give a picture of your dad that you've never seen before — the way he talks to people when you're not around. *[music ceases]*

Then, one morning, after Dad has spent nine months at Vanguard Estates, your phone starts to buzz in a way you've never felt before. Three long buzzes and one short one. *[phone buzzing]* Your home screen is filled with a big red box.

*HEALTH ALERT — Fall Detection.*

*[heavy notes play]*

The Vanguard App provides the basic details – he slipped while getting out of the shower. No immediate serious injury. Robotechs were on the scene in one minute and forty-seven seconds and got him to the hospital in under twenty minutes. You call your sister, and you both head over, a thunderstorm beating at your car's weary roof. *[thunder rolls]*

*[hospital room beeps]*

When you get to the hospital, your dad is confused. He's not quite sure where he is, or why. You can't tell if it's the Alzheimer's or a head injury.

In the hallway, you're met by a tall woman in a polo shirt with the Vanguard Estates logo on it. *[steps down a hall]* This is the first human you've met who works for them. You make a joke about how perhaps she's secretly just a really fancy robot. She doesn't laugh.

***VE REP: The hospital doesn't allow our bots inside, so it is my job to liaise between residents and the facility. Once a resident has a fall, the services in their portfolio change. The check-in bots that you've met will come by more frequently. Residents who've entered into the high-risk category for falling also can't bathe alone. They can be assisted by a robot, or by a human aide. The robot assistant is included in your package. The human would be an additional monthly fee of \$1,200.***

You turn to your dad to see what he thinks. He just looks at you. He doesn't even seem annoyed, just far away. This is maybe your least favorite part of watching him decline. He always used to have opinions about everything. He joked that it was his hobby to have thoughts, even when he had no business judging a situation. But now he just watches you the same way he was watching the water run down the windows earlier.

*[music continues, more intense]*

The Vanguard Estates Representative is watching you too, not even pretending to busy herself with paperwork to buy you time. Your sister gives you a pointed look and glances at

her watch. She has kids to pick up in an hour. It's time to make a decision: opt for robotic baths, or shell out extra money for human ones?

So, what do you do?

Do you go for the robotic baths? Or do you decide it's worth it to pay for the human ones?

*If you want to install a robot to bathe him, go to Episode 14: Robot Baths.*

*If you want to hire a human, go to Episode 15: Human Baths.*

## 8. Explain Missy

*[poppy guitar notes and percussion]*

You tell your dad the truth about Missy. That she's meant to make sure he's okay. That the camera in her eyes connect to a call center in the Philippines.

Your whole body is tense, waiting for him to blow up.

***DAD: Okay, so how does Missy know what to say?***

You explain that sometimes there's a person on the other end, watching and replying. But sometimes there isn't. Basic conversations can be handled by an algorithm.

***DAD: Well, what's the person's name? The one on the other end of the camera.***

You realize that you don't know. You're not even sure if it's always the same person. You stumble through a non-answer, making a note to research the question later. Your dad leans into the robotic cat's face and narrows his eyes.

***DAD: Huh. Well, hello there, whoever you are. I'm Marcus, which you already know. It's nice to meet you.***

***MISSY: Hello Marcus! Nice to meet you!***

***DAD: You already said that.***

***MISSY: So I did. I suppose I forget things sometimes too!***

***DAD: At least we have that in common.***

Your dad straightens and shrugs.

*[music stops]*

**DAD: Okay. Never thought I'd have a cat again, but it will be nice to have another creature in the house. As long as it promises to use the litter box. Where did you put the litter box, by the way?**

**NARR: It doesn't need one dad, it's a robot.**

**DAD (frustrated): Come on, all cats need litter boxes. You know that.**

He has that look on your face, the one you've learned means to stop fighting with him. He's insistent about the litter box, so you stop by the local pet store and buy one, even splurging on the fancy odor-neutralizing stuff he requested. He decides that the best place for it is the laundry room, and you nod your head very seriously and agree.

On a call a few weeks later you ask your father how it's going with Missy.

*[upbeat guitar notes]*

**DAD: Oh! Manny is great. He's a hoot.**

At first, you think he's just mixed up the names. Missy, Manny, close enough.

**DAD: I'm thinking about going to visit him in the Philippines.**

**NARR: Sorry, I think I'm confused. Who do we know that lives in the Philippines?**

**DAD: Manny, the guy who speaks through Missy. Remember the cat you got me?**

*[music becomes jazzy, quizzical]*

You remember the cat. You do not, however, remember a person named Manny.

**DAD: Yeah, turns out he's a huge fan of the Marlins. Remember that signed baseball I had, that you kept telling me not to throw away? I sent it to him, and he loved it!**

**NARR: To Manny. In the Philippines...**

**DAD: Yeah, yeah. He's the one who's always on the other end. We chat all day, it's great. Did you know that Paul Walker was killed because he learned too much about corrupt Filipino charities? Look it up. Manny says it's true. Anyway, he's great, a really funny guy. You know, I was skeptical of this cat thing. But it made me a new friend. Can't really say when's the last time I last made a new friend.**

You're not really sure what to say here. This is probably some kind of protocol breach. Manny is probably not supposed to reveal his identity or talk to your dad about conspiracy theories. But your dad sounds genuinely happy for the first time in a long time.

**DAD: So anyway, Manny says I should come visit. He's going to take me to Fort Santiago, his brother is a tour guide there so we can get a free tour.**

*[music continues]*

Your father absolutely cannot go to the Philippines by himself. But you're not quite ready to take the wind out of his sails just yet, so for the rest of the call you listen to him tell you about his new friend, Manny. Who does seem like a genuinely nice person; who clearly makes your father happy. You don't ask your father if he's considered the possibility that Manny is scamming him. That he's not named Manny at all. That this is some kind of trick. It seems harmless for now, and your dad will probably forget all about this ill-advised trip to Manila in a couple of days. Maybe even a couple of hours.

But he doesn't. He brings it up again, and again, and again. He really, *really* wants to go visit Manny in Manila. *[back to poppy guitar notes and percussion]* Imani thinks you've completely lost it to even consider the possibility. But your dad isn't going to live forever. You could take him on a trip to Manila. At the very least, it can't hurt to consider the possibility, right?

So what do you do?

Do you dig a little further into this Manny character and see if you can take your dad to the Philippines to see him? Or do you tell your dad no, this trip is simply impossible?

*If you want to see if you can take him to Manila, go to Episode 16: Go To Manila.*

*If you want to put your foot down and refuse, go to Episode 17: Don't Go To Manila.*

## 9. Don't Explain Missy

You decide not to worry your dad about the details of how exactly Missy works. You're not sure he could fully grasp the technology anyway. You're frankly not even sure you do.

*[upbeat wind notes]*

Over the next few months, he becomes best friends with Missy. He brings her everywhere, propping her up on counters and tabletops, setting her in the passenger seat of the car he's not supposed to be driving anymore. He talks to her, tells her jokes, tells you stories about all the funny things she said.

It's kind of sweet. But you can't quite shake the worry that it might also be kind of creepy. He doesn't know that there's a person on the other end. He also doesn't know that you can log in remotely and watch him through that same camera. Every so often, you check in. And sometimes, you hear him tell Missy things you've never heard before. One day, he leans up close to the cat's face.

***DAD: Missy, I need to tell you something very important.***

***MISSY: What's that, Marcus?***

**DAD: My wife...**

He pauses, and as he does, Missy generates a photo of your mom that you've loaded into the app. *[chime]* She does this regularly to provide your dad with reminders of his life, to help him manage the dementia. He looks at the photo lovingly.

**DAD: Yeah, Sasha, she was so beautiful. But... there was another woman. Just a few times. Mary; her name was Mary, I think. I visited her a few times. Sasha never knew. I wish I had told her, before... but now it's too late.**

**MISSY: You are a good person, Marcus. I love you.**

*[forward-pushing rhythmic notes]*

This is what Missy is programmed to say when she senses that a client is getting sad.

You are stunned. An affair! A woman named Mary! You immediately want to turn on your microphone to ask him questions, but of course you don't.

*[music becomes more eerie]*

Over the next few weeks, your dad confesses other new things to Missy. How he once wanted to be an astronaut. How his first kiss was at a Rush concert. How just last week he got gas from the local gas station without paying because he'd forgotten his wallet and he didn't want to admit he was forgetting things.

A few days later you get a call from a police officer. *[phone buzzing]* Your dad is in jail. The charge: petty theft.

Over the phone with the precinct, you learn that the app behind Missy is required by law to report crimes it hears about. Your dad's story about stealing gas triggered the system, which transcribed the conversation and sent it over to the police, who showed up the next day to arrest him. Missy was a rat! A 92-year-old man, in jail for stealing a few gallons of gas to save his pride.

You get in the car to go bail him out. On the way, you practice your speech. Dad, you're going to say, remember: you can't trust robots.

**END**

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## 10. Install Cameras

*[quiet electronic tune plays]*

You and your sister install a few hidden cameras in the house, just to keep an eye on him. They watch the front and back door, and the kitchen, and they're designed specifically for seniors. According to the pamphlets, they can sense a fall coming and keep track of whether your dad is taking his medications. The cameras can't actually do anything about those things, of course, but they can alert you and emergency services if something really bad happens.

You feel bad intruding on your father's privacy, but you remind yourself that at least this way he gets to stay in his own house and avoid the robots.

Soon enough, the cameras confirm your worst fear: he's still driving. One day, you watch, horrified, as his car backs out of the driveway. You try to talk to him about it on the phone to tell him that if he needs a ride, he can just call you. But he claims he's not driving. You can't tell if he's lying, or if he just doesn't remember.

*[phone buzzing]*

Then one day he calls you, frantic.

**DAD: I NEED YOUR HELP. I'm stuck in the car.**

**NARR: Where are you?**

**DAD: I'm at home but I'm stuck in the car. I can't get out. I need you to come here and let me out.**

**NARR: Are you hurt, Dad?**

**DAD: No, I'm not hurt. I'm stuck! I am stuck! I can't get out!**

**NARR: Okay, okay. I'm on my way; I'll meet you there. Don't panic.**

*[engine and road noise]*

You break several laws trying to get to him, wracking your brain about how he could possibly be stuck in the car. Had he flipped it somehow? Driven into a tree? Something worse?

When you get to his house, the car is parked serenely in the driveway, not a scratch on it. *[snoring]* Your father is asleep behind the wheel, his head tilted back, mouth open. You gently wake him.

***NARR: Hey dad, so, what's the problem?***

***DAD: (stirring awake) Uh, uh, what? Oh! I'm stuck! A strap has trapped me! See?! This strap is trapping me! I can't get out!***

*[Dad struggling]* The door is unlocked; everything is fine. You realize he's forgotten what a seatbelt is. You reach over to unbuckle him and bring him inside. *[seatbelt slides; footsteps]*

***NARR: Dad, remember how you're not supposed to drive?***

***DAD: (agitated) I have places to be!***

You eye his keys on the table, but he catches you and snatches them away, glaring, as he walks into the other room.

*[quiet electronic tune resumes]*

You rub your temples. You can't have him driving — he's only going to hurt himself, or someone else. Maybe if you took on some additional work you could afford an aide for him around the house, to help him out. It would cost about \$3,500 a month. Then again, you're stretched thin enough as it is, and Imani's husband recently lost his job, so collectively, you're even more strapped for cash than usual — surely you could find a way to stop him from driving yourself?

So, what do you do?

Do you decide to deal with this car problem yourself? Or do you decide it's time to hire someone, or something, to help him at home?

*If you want to handle the car and work from there, go to Episode 18: Handle it Yourself.*

*If you want to hire someone, go to Episode 19: Pay for Help.*

## 11. Move Him In

*[poppy guitar notes and percussion]*

Your house is not really big enough for two adults, especially not when one of them doesn't want to be there. And there's only one bathroom. And you're trying to work and finish your master's degree at the same time. You coordinate for movers to bring your dad's stuff over from Vanguard, so now the house feels overly packed. Kind of like you've been overzealous at the soda fountain and you're trying to put the top on and spilling soda all over your hands.

Your father and you have always had a strange relationship. You're the fun one, the one who used to sneak him cigarettes when he was trying to quit, the one who stayed up late listening to his records and trash-talking your neighbors. You always had fun together, but you were never close. You chose antics over deep conversations — you were always in motion, always getting up to something so that neither of you really had to talk about what was on your mind.

You certainly aren't an expert in caring for someone with dementia, but you're pretty sure that antics are not part of the care plan.

At first, things go okay. It's kind of fun, even. You play card games, and you can't tell if he's cheating or if he can't actually remember the rules or where the game play was. You pull out his old record collection and dance around to his favorite songs. You even start recording some of his old stories. You suspect most of them are, let's say, "highly embellished," but it's still fun.

*[music concludes]*

But the honeymoon phase doesn't last long.

It starts at night, with a knocking on your door. *[knocks]* He's up all the time, it turns out. And he's bored, and often a little bit confused about where he is. *[door creaks, quiet chatter]* At first, you assume he'll settle down, find a routine, and stop waking you up every couple of hours. But he doesn't. You realize that, often, he doesn't even know what time it is. He asks for lunch at 1am, thinking it's 1pm.

*[solemn guitar notes play]*

Next come the mood swings. Fast and strong and very uncharacteristic of your dad. One second, you're laughing together about some annoying neighbor; the next, he's scowling and lashing out at you for being "judgmental and rude."

The changes are exhausting, and frustrating, but you soldier on because they're not exactly dangerous. But that doesn't last either.

**DAD: (grunting with effort)**

One day, while you're at work, he tries to rearrange the furniture in the house, convinced that things aren't where they're supposed to be. *[grumbling]* He becomes convinced that there are spiderwebs everywhere, and that your house is always dirty. You're not a neat freak, but the house is certainly not covered in spiderwebs. *[vacuum whirrs]* Most days,

when you get home from work, exhausted, you find your father vacuuming, sweeping, or glaring into a corner, mumbling about how he should have raised a neater child. Sometimes you find him tangled in the vacuum cord, struggling against it. *[grunting, grumbling, splashing]* Other times you find him with too much bleach in a bucket. Enough bleach that you start to worry.

Being out of the house all day is starting to seem less and less safe. He really shouldn't be left alone that long. But you still hold out hope that maybe his cleaning phase will pass. Maybe he'll go back to his conspiracy theory books, settle into reading on the couch, and stop touching your bleach. You need your job to pay off your student loans, and you need this master's degree to get a better job to pay off the rest of your bills. And it's not just the money — you love your job. You're finally making headway on a career; impressing your bosses and feeling like maybe you've found your calling.

*[music fades, more upbeat guitar notes begin]*

And yet, you realize that your current setup with him simply isn't working. He needs more attention, either from you or someone else. But your choice is to either give up something you want very badly, or take on additional debt. So what do you do?

Do you drop out of your master's program and shift your hours around so you can be home with him more? Or do you take out a second mortgage on your house to pay for at-home care?

*If you want to drop your master's and shift things around, go to Episode 20: Drop Out of School. If you want to go for the loan, go to Episode 21: Take Out a Loan.*

## 12. Don't Tell Him

You watch as he shuffles into the bedroom and closes the door. After a few seconds, the stove turns off. This place is smart after all. Maybe it's time to trust them a little bit more.

*[thoughtful electronic notes play]*

The next morning you Drop-In at your regular time. *[motorized wheels turning]* The usual robot wheels in to say hello. Or maybe it's a different robot. You still can't tell.

You listen as the bot asks its regular set of questions.

**ROBOT: How are you feeling today, Mr. Jones? How did you sleep?**

**DAD: Well enough.**

**ROBOT: Have you felt confused at all recently?**

**DAD: Only about just how many clones of Queen Elizabeth there really were.**

The robot doesn't get the joke. Or at least, you're pretty sure it was a joke. Then again, your dad did recently tell you that he had a conversation with a TV host and that someone on the radio was trying to sell his couch without his permission. You can't see his face to tell if he's got his left eyebrow raised or not — his usual joke giveaway. You wonder if robots understand eyebrow raises or not. There's probably a whole algorithm for that, right?

**ROBOT: Does this confusion distress you?**

**DAD: Oh yeah, clones are very upsetting.**

**ROBOT: Thank you for your answers, Mr. Jones. I am going to add Donepezil to your daily prescription regimen. Please inform me if you feel any adverse effects.**

You feel a flash of anger take you by surprise. Your dad's already taking a bunch of different medications, and you're pretty sure the combination has made him more sluggish. Should they really be adding another? Should a robot really be making that kind of choice based on a single possible joke about clones?

You reach for the mouse, to step in and stop the robot from adding another medication, but before you click, you pause. This is what you're paying the big bucks for, isn't it? Predictive care, quantified and calculated by robots who are always watching. And frankly, you're still not sure if your dad is joking about the clones or not.

So, what do you do? Do you decide to speak up and stop the robot from adding another medication? Or do you stay quiet and trust the robots to manage his medicine?

*If you want to step in and protest, go to Episode 22: Stop the Robot.*

*If you want to let it go and let them run the show, go to Episode 23: Trust the Robot*

### 13. Tell Him

You click the mic button.

*[light, up-tempo music]*

**NARR: Hey, Dad. It's me. I'm using this weird app they apparently have for you, where I can kind of, like, check in?**

He freezes and looks around. Eventually, his eyes settle on the ceiling, but at the wrong spot. You're talking to the back of his head now.

**DAD: Are you spying on me?**

**NARR: No, no, I mean, I just checked in to see how it was going. The stove is still on, so I just wanted to let you know. Goodnight!**

You close out of the window before you can hear his response. *[music ceases]*

The next morning you decide to Drop-In again to apologize, and to talk about the feature to see how he feels about it.

*[Drop-In chime]*

**NARR: Hi, Dad.**

**DAD (chuckling to himself): Ah, back to spying on me, I see.**

You try to explain that you didn't mean to. That you weren't even totally sure what the Drop-In button did when you first clicked it, that it felt unsafe to *not* say something about the stove being on.

**DAD: Right. Sure. Well... I guess I shouldn't be surprised. This whole place is full of cameras. I found one in a book on the shelf the other day when I was perusing.**

He's facing you now, probably by accident since he still doesn't seem to know where your camera is. He's got that thinking look on his face, the one that means he will say something else eventually, if you're patient enough. You're not patient enough on most days, but today you try to be.

**DAD: My, how the tables have turned, huh?**

You're not sure what that means, exactly.

**DAD: Not that we put cameras in your room or anything. But we used to, you know, keep tabs on you kids in other ways. And now you're watching me, like some kind of reverse parent. Which, I guess is... how this goes, huh?**

You don't want to be his parent. You aren't sure if you want to be anybody's parent. The thought makes you realize that your dad probably won't ever meet your kids, if you have any. You've lost the chance at a certain kind of relationship with him. You always thought you'd have more time.

**DAD: I don't mind it, I guess. If that's what you were going to ask. This whole drop-in situation. I'll just pretend you came around and knocked on the door to say hi. Like we're neighbors. I can tell you about my day, we can pretend to drink coffee together.**

When he puts it that way, it doesn't sound so bad. So you do. *[chime]* You drop in here and there, and you hear about his days and the surprisingly high levels of drama at the facility.

**DAD: Oh, I meant to tell you the latest scandal.**

It's evening, so you're both drinking beers. He's technically not supposed to, but you've compromised that he gets one a week, when you call.

**DAD: There's a chlamydia outbreak here.**

You think you must have misheard him.

**DAD: It's gotten so bad they've officially banned sex among residents! I'm not exactly sure how they're enforcing that one. It's not like people here are putting a sock on their door when they're doing it. [absentmindedly rambling] I guess technically you could still have sex with someone from outside the facility, so it's not like a true nunnery in here or anything...**

You quickly change the subject. You're not really keen on thinking about your father's sex life. In fact, in this moment, you choose to believe it doesn't exist. It's childish of you, you know that, and yet, you can't help it.

[chime] The next week you drop in on your father for a quick chat. [bass rhythm plays] You're excited to tell him about your recent promotion and vaguely more impressive job title. But before you can announce yourself, you see something you were not prepared to witness. [springs squeaking] Your father, in action, on the couch. The woman beneath him is enjoying herself. Loudly. [thud] You slam your laptop shut as quickly as you can and stare off into space for a while, trying to process what you just saw.

[bassy music continues] Then you remember — the sex ban. The chlamydia outbreak. Your father could be getting chlamydia right this very moment. Should you go back and stop them? Clear your throat loudly, like you really are God judging them from above for their sins? No, you decide you'll spare him that indignity at least. But you know you have to bring it up. So you do, the next day, hesitant as you click Drop-In, hoping this time he's fully clothed.

[chime] When you ask him about it, as awkwardly as possible, he blinks.

**DAD (flatly): I don't know what you're talking about.**

He denies it up and down. He accuses *you* of being on drugs. Bad ones, if that's what they're making you imagine. But you know what you saw!

Somehow, the robots are unaware of what happened that night. There's no record of this particular "social interaction" on any of his charts or tabs. And you're pretty sure it would be there. They log every single snippet of his day, down to who he says hello to in the hallways.

Scanning through his interaction logs, you realize that you have a choice. You can let this go and hope for the best. Or you can inform the facility that your father broke the no-sex rule and should probably be tested for STIs.

So, what do you do?

Do you let it go, and hope you never have to think about it again? Or do you tell the robots that your father got laid recently, against their wishes?

*If you want to let it go, go to Episode 24: Keep His Secret.*

*If you want to say something to the robots, go to Episode 25: Report Him.*

## 14. Robot Baths

*[light guitar harmonies bop]*

The bath bots don't even really look like robots to you. They're more like turning your bathroom into a carwash for people. *[robot movements]* Two giant arms installed into the walls equipped with cameras and sensors. You and your sister both sign the various privacy waivers involved. Your eyes glaze over reading the Terms and Conditions. Data collected and stored in a profile and something something something, anonymized... something. You accept. Nobody ever reads the terms and conditions, do they? Maybe Imani does.

You take turns with her explaining the bots to your dad over the phone. He shouldn't be alarmed, they're very safe. Plus, wouldn't it be weird to have a stranger giving you a bath? Robots are less awkward.

He's skeptical at first, but eventually he comes around. Apparently the robot has learned the exact order in which he likes to wash, which delights him.

For months, things are good. The various notifications Vanguard sends you each day fade into a pleasant lull. They remind you he's still around, still playing poker as badly as ever, still arguing with the robots about something or another. The little red notifications are like an ambient track, soothing, because they remind you he's still there. Sure, you could probably call and visit more. But he seems happy. You have even begun to begrudgingly accept that Imani was right. Which of course, you would never tell her.

*[music fades away]* Then, one day, you're going through your own morning routine — one not all that dissimilar from your father's, you learned early on from a report on his daily habits. You wake up, push what is hopefully the correct button on the coffee machine, and lean against the counter, listening to the radio while it brews. *[bright jazzy music and coffee sounds]* You don't really pay attention to the news as much as let it slide over you.



You have this theory that the radio waves somehow encode the information in your cells, even if you aren't actually listening. So that later when someone mentions something you get that vague sense of recollection and say, "Oh yeah, I did hear about that."

***NPR-STYLE HOST JIRA LEWIS-COHEN: And now, in tech news, a new wrinkle in senior care emerged this weekend when the biggest supplier of senior care bath robots was hacked. Millions of hours of video have been posted online. It's unclear what the end goal of the cyberattack was — according to Balnumium, the company behind these robotic bath aides, the perpetrators have made no contact or demands.***

*[ominous electronic music fades in]*

You pick yourself up off the counter and grab your phone, quickly Googling words you never thought you'd type: senior bath robot hack. Sure enough, Vanguard Estates is on the list of compromised facilities. Right on cue, a new email slides across the top of your screen — a message from the facility, vaguely assuring families that they're on top of the situation and that there's nothing to worry about whatsoever.

You find the link to the page where the footage is posted. There's a pit deep in your stomach as you click. It's a wall of wrinkly, naked screenshots. You're relieved to see that no names or patient numbers are attached — nobody would recognize these people unless they really knew them. You also realize that the only way to find out if your dad is on here is to scrutinize every one of the thousands and thousands of videos.

Your dad will probably never see this page. In fact, he'll never even see this news. The facility has tight filters on the news that residents get, and they certainly will remove this from their feeds. There's no way he would know if you didn't say something.

When you video chat later that day, he can tell you're being weird.

***DAD: What's wrong?***

***NARR: Why do you think something's wrong?***

***DAD: You're doing that thing where you tug the hair on the back of your neck so you don't blurt out what's on your mind.***

*[slightly ominous music continues]*

It's nice to see him this lucid, this observant. But you also sort of wish you had caught him in a slightly less clear moment. Because now you really have to choose. Should you tell him? You don't even know if he's on here or not, and you're not sure how he'll take it. You consider whether *you* would want to know, if it was you.

Do you decide to tell him about the hack? Or do you keep it to yourself? There's no point stressing him out about something he can't do anything about.

*If you want to explain the hack to him, go to Episode 26: Break the News.  
If you want to keep the news from him, go to Episode 27: Keep Quiet.*

## 15. Human Baths

*[upbeat rhythmic notes]*

You're glad you decided to bring someone in to help your dad bathe, but it wasn't easy to find a fit. Your dad doesn't like the first few people you hire, and when you do eventually find someone he does like, they quit six months later. Senior care pays so poorly these days, and is such a demanding job, that most people don't last more than a few years.

He goes through three more people until, finally, you find a good match. A big guy named Sven. Your dad likes Sven. He talks just enough, and about the right things: football and World War II history.

The quest is over. Until, a few months later, you get a call.

*[phone buzzing]*

**NARR: Hi, Dad.**

**DAD: Hey, kiddo.**

**NARR: How's it going?**

**DAD: (sighs) Today was Sven's last day.**

**NARR: Wait, why? What happened?**

**DAD: He got hired in California at one of those big fancy retirement homes.**

**NARR: I'm sorry. I'm sure we can find another good one.**

**DAD: (pause) You know, I married your mother 40 years ago. Before that, I was in love only once. With a girl named Mary. She was Italian. It was never going to work out. Not because she was Italian. She liked those woven baskets, and festive candles, and camping. But when you're young and in love, you know, you're foolish. Anyway, we went on a few dates. Then I met your mother. I asked her to marry me after five dates.**

You're not really sure where he's going here, but you've gotten used to him rambling on the phone. You start to organize your laundry while he carries on.

**DAD: The point I'm trying to make is that I'm not good at dating. I'm out of practice. I usually get dinner before I let someone see me naked. You know?**

You don't really know.

**NARR: Did you want to... get dinner with Sven?**

**DAD: No. That's not the point. I don't want any more strangers in my house looking at me naked.**

*[thoughtful electronic tune plays]*

You take a deep breath and get ready to explain to him again that he isn't allowed to bathe himself at Vanguard. The protocol once a resident falls is really strict. But before you can he cuts you off:

**DAD: I've been talking to some of the other residents here, and some of them have this thing ... A bath bot? Do you think... I think I'd like one of those instead. I mean, I don't know how much they are, but... do you think we could do that?**

You have to laugh; after all your stress about making sure he gets human care! You tell him you can *definitely* do that. I mean, they're cheaper than the humans he's been using!

**DAD: I've been using! You're the one who's set me on a series of naked blind dates! (laughter)**

You're already pulling up the Vanguard Portal on your computer to change his settings and request a bath bot installation. You tell him you'll order one right then.

**DAD: Great, thanks kiddo. Love you.**

**NARR: Love you too, Dad.**

**END**

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## 16. Go To Manila

You figure it can't hurt to do a little research into this Manny person. So you message him through your side of the app. He's friendly, and kind, and seems totally understanding of your skepticism. He promises he really just likes your dad and wants to make him happy. And when you ask the company to confirm that Manuel "Manny" Abalos works for them, they confirm that he's a stellar employee based out of their offices just outside Manila.

*[soft ethereal notes play]*

They clarify that, in general, they don't encourage workers to disclose their real names or locations, but they don't expressly forbid it. They tell you that sometimes, a patient connects better when they have some basic information about their companion. They offer to send you their white papers on the topic, with outcomes quantified, but you aren't all that interested in that. All you care about is that Manny is a real, bona fide employee who does not seem interested in scamming your father out of his remaining meager funds.

Your dad can't go alone, obviously, so you book two round-trip tickets to Manila. He's over-the-moon excited about it, and you agree to keep your trip a secret from Imani, who will ask way too many questions and make you both feel like you're rebellious teenagers. Which maybe you kind of are.

*[light, upbeat guitar notes play] [airplane soaring through the sky]* Manny meets you at the airport with a huge smile, holding a little paper sign with a picture of a cat on it. Your dad doesn't quite get the joke, but you find it incredibly endearing. By the time he pulls out a color-coded itinerary of all the things he wants to show your dad, he's fully won you over. You tell him about his litter box back at home, and he tells you about his giant family and how he got into working for the robot cat company in the first place. How he wishes more of his patients could come visit him. How glad he is that your father is here.

Standing at the edge of a hotel's rooftop bar, you watch Manny put a steadying hand on your father's back, while pointing out landmarks and his childhood home. They laugh about some basketball joke you don't get. They bend their heads together and whisper about some silly theory about how a secret society probably built the temple they can see from above. Your father might not remember any of this next week. He's falling further into that waxy shell every day and staying there for longer. But for now, he's smiling and laughing. He's made a friend, and you decide it's okay if he doesn't remember the details, really. As long as he's happy.

**END**

*[outro music, slightly haunting electronic tune punctuated with long ringing notes]*

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## 17. Don't Go To Manila

You try to let your father down easy. Well, that’s not strictly true. First, you try to avoid the question for a little longer. But then he mentions that he’s been pricing out flights, and you realize he might buy himself a ticket and disappear on you. And that’s when you try to let him down easy.

*[soft, somber notes play]*

It doesn’t go well. You feel like you’re crushing his dreams. In fact, he tells you you’re crushing his dreams. He pulls the “I might not have much longer to live” card more than once. And he’s not wrong. You call Imani for backup, but even though, for once, she agrees with you, her bedside manner leaves something to be desired. By the end of the call, you’re all shouting at each other.

Somehow the conversation is no longer about a trip to Manila, but about everything. All the things you’ve decided for your father. All the things he hates about his life, his condition. The way he’s losing control, the way you’ve taken control from him. Imani screams at you for taking him away from Vanguard, and he screams back at her that he’s happier at home with his friend Manny. Imani is convinced Manny is out for money, or his kidneys, or both. You try to point out that our father’s kidneys probably aren’t worth very much, and apparently that’s the wrong thing to say.

Dad threatens to go to Manila anyway. Imani threatens to camp out outside his home. At some point, you hear the robotic cat in the background asking if everything is okay. There's more yelling.

Towards the end, you put the phone down and lay your cheek down on your crappy kitchen counter and close your eyes. You can still hear them arguing, but it's reached the stage where the two of them just have to exhaust themselves. The sound becomes a kind of stressful white noise. Your mind drifts away to your own future. Your own eventual decline. Your own currently nonexistent children who might try, in the future, to do the right thing, but struggle and maybe even fail. You hope they don't hand you over to robots. You make a note to put that somewhere in a will you don't currently have.

The argument winds down, and it finally ends the way these things always do.

***IMANI: Good chat.***

***DAD: That's one way to put it.***

***IMANI: Talk to you next week?***

***DAD: Yep.***

***IMANI: Love you, dad.***

***DAD: Love you too.***

They hang up, having forgotten about you. Which is normal, and this time, oddly reassuring.

*[quizzical, jazzy music rings]*

A month later, your father dies peacefully in his sleep. He leaves everything to Manny.

**END**

*[outro music continues, quizzical and haunting]*

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## 18. Handle it Yourself

*[mischievous, upbeat guitar tune plays]*

If you can just fix this car thing, he'll be so much safer. Then you can deal with the rest of it. You decide to stay and make your dad dinner. Inside the fridge, you find weeks' worth of vegetables that you were having delivered.

While you slice the ones that are salvageable, you think about what to do about the car. You can't just steal his keys. He'll notice. And you can't take the car away, either. He'd be furious, and it would only make things worse. Then, you have an idea.

*[music continues with various percussion]*

By the time you've put the lasagna in the oven, your dad has fallen asleep on the couch. *[snoring]* You creep by and take his keys from him. *[keys jingling, door opens]* Then you go out into the garage, and dig around until you find it. A small metal file. *[metal grinding]* You spend the next half-hour slowly shaving down the teeth on his keys, just enough so they won't work anymore.

You sneak the keys back next to him on the couch when you're done. You don't like tricking him like this; it feels mean and kind of gross, but the alternative feels worse.

At home, you call your sister to let her know what you did, in case he calls to complain about how the car won't start.

***IMANI: That's kind of genius... I bet a robot would never have come up with that.***

You're quite proud of yourself, but it doesn't last long.

***IMANI: You know what would be a better solution, though?***

*Of course* she wants to show you up.

***IMANI: Getting him a driverless car.***

*[quizzical, jazzy music rings]*

And here you are again, about to fight about whether to hand your dad's life over to technology. But this time, you're starting to think that your sister might be right. Or at the very least, that this argument won't die until your dad does.

**END**

*[outro music continues, quizzical and haunting]*

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## 19. Pay for Help

You call your sister.

***NARR: This isn't working.***

***IMANI: It's not. He needs more and we can't pretend he doesn't.***

***NARR: So what the hell are we supposed to do?***

***IMANI: You're the one who doesn't like any of my solutions!***

*[somber notes play]*

She's right, you've nixed all her high-tech helpers. You're the reason he's at home with no supervision. This is on you now.

So, over the next few days, you research. You feel weird searching for things like “senior care, not robots” but that's what you want. There are dozens of websites with profiles of human home aides. Some of them even advertise that they offer “the human touch,” something robots can't. By the end of your research binge, you have a whole list of options. All human.



The problem is, you can't afford any of them. The pool of qualified human caretakers has dwindled, and those who are left are expensive and in high demand. Vanguard Estates wasn't cheap, but it was cheaper than any robot-free solution.

There is a senior care facility nearby staffed entirely by humans that, at \$6,500 a month, you can just barely afford if you take on a second job, and a second mortgage. But it has a wait list of two years.

But what else is there to do? You just can't leave him with robots; the thought alone makes your stomach drop. So, you add his name to the waitlist. And you wait, trying to push away the morbid hope that someone else's parent will die, so that your dad gets a place to live.

**END**

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## 20. Drop Out of School

*[light electronic melody plays]*

You talk to your advisor about the situation and make arrangements to defer your master's for another year. You watch your classmates get internships and amazing job offers. You try to tell yourself that you'll be there too, someday. You're not exactly sure how long your dad will be with you. It's not that you hope he's gone in a year, but in the darkest moments of the night, you admit that maybe you do. Just a little. Then you feel terrible about daydreaming about his death. He's still your dad, even if he feels like a stranger most days. And so the cycle continues.

It doesn't help that everything keeps getting harder. You're around more now, so you can see each step in his slow descent. When you're feeling kind, you try to remember that this

must be terrifying for him. You try to feel kind as much as possible, but sometimes it's hard. Imani makes it clear that she has no sympathy for you at all. You talk less now than you did before, which is saying something. Everybody else either nods and tries to change the subject, or waxes poetic about how few kids these days uphold their duties to their parents. Neither reaction makes you feel better.

*[pots clanging]* One night, you wake to a sharp yelp and the smell of fire. *[quiet outburst of pain]* You had dozed off after refusing to make him a grilled cheese sandwich at 2 o'clock in the morning, and he tried to make one himself. *[grumbling]* Angry and holding his singed wrist, he lashes out.

**DAD: Where is the cat?!**

It takes you a second to figure out the question. You don't have a cat. You've told him this already.

**DAD: I know you've hidden the cat! You hate that the cat likes me better, don't you? You never could stand being the least favorite!**

*[music changes to haunting, ominous]*

That one hurts, but you try to stay calm. *[angry grumbling, rifling of objects]* He's been doing this more, suddenly latching onto an idea and holding tight. You try to talk him down, tell him that the cat is sleeping. That maybe it's time for all of us to go to bed.

**DAD: No! I know you're keeping the cat in a cupboard or something. Which is animal abuse. The cat has done nothing wrong!**

*[shuffling of objects, slams, grunts, outbursts]*

He starts throwing open the cabinets and tearing things out of them — boxes of mac and cheese, cans of beans, a package of hotdog buns — searching for a cat you don't have. You're exhausted, adrenaline still pumping from the fear that your father had seriously hurt himself and potentially set your house on fire. You're in over your head and it's 2 o'clock in the morning, and he's destroying your kitchen, and you're not proud of it, but you start yelling back. Cursing him for saddling you with this responsibility, for not having anybody else to go live with, for not appreciating everything you're trying to do for him. He's screaming back at you, for hiding the cat, for not being Imani, for forcing him to live with you, for not making a grilled cheese for lunch.

*[music intensifies]*

You're not even sure how the next moment happens, but he suddenly lunges at you. *[Dad growls]* You react on instinct, *[hard thud]* shoving him to the ground, hard. *[heaving breaths]* It's not until he's lying on his back, frail and panting, the whites of his eyes reflecting the overly bright kitchen light, that you realize what's happened.

He's not hurt. But you don't sleep another moment that night. Your hands shake as you lay in bed, fumbling with your phone, scrolling through forums for people in your position, caring for their own parents with dementia with no training or support. It's heartening to

know you're not alone, but nobody has any real answers beyond: get richer somehow so you can pay for help.

*[wavy electronic notes beating]*

The next morning you apologize to your father. He doesn't remember anything, despite the red welt on his wrist from the stove. He does ask why the kitchen is such a mess, though.

So you begin again, another day, hoping this one goes a little better. Reading more forums. Confiscating more cleaning supplies. Reminding your father of who you are. Wondering how many more days you have to do this for. And if either of you are going to make it.

**END**

*[wavy electronic notes continue throughout]*

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## 21. Take Out a Loan

*[calm harmonies play softly]*

You've never been great with money, but you're smart enough to know that taking out another loan is going to be a huge pain. A long-term pain. But somehow, the future pain of a loan feels worth it to handle the overwhelm of the present, the reality that you're not really equipped to take care of your dad.

At breakfast, you tell your father that you're looking into some options to pay for home care. You try to be vague so he doesn't worry. It's depressing, and soul sucking, and terrifying, but you do look into it, and eventually take out the best loan you can find (which might not be the best loan there is, honestly, it's hard to tell). When the money hits your bank account, you book appointments with some potential caregivers.

Even with the loan, you can't afford for a caregiver to work whole days, but you find a lovely woman named Mei who comes by and helps in the mornings. She's quiet but firm. She hates small talk. But your dad actually listens to her, which grants you time to work and study. You try not to think about the money too much, but it's hard when your mailbox is crammed full of ads from random loan companies trying to con you into their latest high-interest scam. You throw them all in the trash, cursing whichever company sold your information to the vultures. *[music fades down]*

*[paper sliding]* A few months later, Mei slides a letter at you across the kitchen counter. She points at it like it's potentially full of anthrax, and scowls at you like you're trying to murder her. You don't recognize it, and you tell her so, but she points again.

When you open it, your stomach drops. Your father's name is at the top, above an account number. And there's an overdue balance, bold and red. \$2,845.43.

You bring the letter to your dad and ask him if he recognizes it. He looks proud.

***DAD: Yeah! You mentioned needing help paying for Mei. I did a bit of research and found a good deal.***

*[haunting music plays quietly]*

You try to explain to your dad that the deal he got was not, in fact, good. Doing a little math, you realize that the loan was originally for \$600, with 555% interest. You've never had a poker face, and your dad can tell you're not as proud as he thought you would be.

***DAD (very angry): I helped! You never let me do anything, but this was something I could do. I helped you find money for this. For Mei. For... for me!***

He looks helpless on top of being angry. You try not to think about how feeble he seems, how thin and bony his hand is gripping the letter. The same hand that signed that awful loan document, his pen probably shaking as he carefully scrawled out his name. You drop it, thanking him for his help. Once he's gone back to watch TV with Mei, you write the check for \$2,845.43.

\$3,000 isn't a complete dealbreaker; you can take it out of your meager savings. But now it's yet another item in your endless running ledger of costs. That night you pull up your own spreadsheets. You calculate that at this rate, you'll be in debt for at least another decade. No matter how you calculate things, it's clear that you'll be paying off your father's care for years after he dies.

You try to focus on the other things that you'll have to remember him by, but with the red numbers glowing back at you on your spreadsheet, it can feel like this will be his primary legacy for you after he's gone. And you can't help but feel like it's not the only debt you might never be able to repay.

**END**

*[haunting electronic music continues]*

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## 22. Stop the Robot

*[click]* You click the mic button and clear your throat, ready to give this robot your best professionally intimidating voice.

***NARR: Excuse me, do you really think he needs another medication?***

Your dad turns and stares at the ceiling, clearly confused. You can explain yourself later. The robot turns to face you.

*[up-tempo electronic notes]*

***ROBOT: I am fully licensed to evaluate residents and administer medication. Please see the terms and conditions of Vanguard Estates to learn more.***

Of course you didn’t read the terms and conditions. You lean into the computer’s microphone.

***NARR: I don’t care what you’re licensed for. My father doesn’t need another medication.***

***ROBOT: Your vocal signature clearly indicates that you are distraught. High stress experiences can trigger our residents with dementia.***

*[music becomes tense] [motors whirring]* The robot moves towards you. It's a smooth but startling movement. The robot's screen, which usually just shows blue clouds or another soothing image, is now pulsing red. A warning that only you can see.

**ROBOT: If you cannot calm down, I am going to have to end this session.**

**NARR: CALM DOWN? Do not tell me to calm down.**

*[music ceases abruptly]*

Suddenly, your screen goes black.

**ROBOT 2: Our system has detected a dangerous situation for one of our residents. Your session has been terminated, and the Drop-In function has been locked for 12 hours. For more information, or to apply for re-entry, call 1-800-DROP-INS.**

For a moment, you're stunned. Then you're enraged. You grab your phone and dial the number. You do not envy whatever robot or human winds up picking up the line.

*[ringing]*

**ROBOT 2: Welcome to Drop-In, a service for the Vanguard Estates. If you are calling to activate Drop-In service, press 1. If you are calling about technical difficulties with Drop-In, press two. If you are calling to apply for reentry to Drop-In, press 3.**

*[selection 3 tone]*

**ROBOT 2: Please hold for the next available representative.**

*[hold music]*

**ROBOT 2: Welcome to Drop-In, a service for the Vanguard Estates.**

**NARR: What the fuck?**

**ROBOT 2: If you are calling to activate Drop-In service, press one. If you are calling about technical difficulties with Drop-In, press two. If you are calling to apply for reentry to Drop-In, press three.**

*[long press selection 3]*

*[hold music]*

**ROBOT 2: Welcome to Drop-In, a service of the Vanguard Estates. You have reached our automated Drop-In re-entry portal. To apply for reentry to Drop-In please answer the following questions. If you are family, press one. If you're an employed caregiver, press two.**

*[selection 1 tone]*

**ROBOT 2: Please state the name of the family member for whom you are calling about Drop-In services.**

**NARR: Marcus Jones.**

**ROBOT 2: Thank you. Our records indicate that Marcus Jones recently experienced a high-intensity interaction. High-stress experiences can trigger our residents with dementia. If we believe that a family member has caused or contributed to said high-intensity interaction, their access to Drop-In may be removed for 12 hours. For more information, or to apply for re-entry, call 1-800-DROP-INS.**

**NARR: I already called that number, that's how I got here!**

*[long press dial]*

**ROBOT 2 VOICE: Welcome to Drop-In, a service of the Vanguard Estates. If you are calling to activate Drop-In service, press one. If you are calling about technical difficulties with Drop-In, press two. If you are calling to apply for re-entry to Drop-In, press three.**

*[selection 3 tone]*

**ROBOT 2 VOICE: Please hold for the next available representative.**

*[hold music...]*

**END**

*[hold music slowly warps into creepy version, descends into chaos]*

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## 23. Trust the Robot

You decide to trust the bots. Isn't this the point of all of this technology, and data, and monitoring? Better care? Maybe they've caught something you missed.

*[quiet, thoughtful electronic notes]*

But a few months later you visit, and your dad is totally different. He's tired, removed, suddenly uninterested in talking about things he once loved to lecture you about. You try to poke him by making a joke about the moon landing being fake. Nothing.

Maybe it's the new drugs? He's on so many of them now, and you're not even sure what each of them does. In the app, it lists what he's taking, and when, and how much, and all the ways they've supposedly improved his health. But the data doesn't line up with what you saw.

After the visit, you call your sister. She's noticed too, but she's not quite ready to jump to conclusions. You have a long conversation about how to tell if it's the drugs, or his decline. She cites numbers at you, life expectancy post-diagnosis, meta-reviews of various treatment protocols. But in the end, you just can't shake the memory of your dad, more withdrawn than ever before, mumbling about how they really should landscape better at the facility even though it's the dead of winter and everything is covered in snow.

Eventually, you decide to object. There has got to be a less drug-intensive way to take care of him.

You call Vanguard's medical helpline.

*[phone ringing]*

**ROBOT 2: Welcome to the Vanguard Estates medical information portal. Please enter your resident's eight-digit identification number.**

*[dialing]*

**ROBOT 2: Thank you. Marcus Jones is currently taking:**

**Memantine, 15mg daily**

**Donepezil, 10mg daily**

**Galantamine, 24mg daily**

**Metoprolol, 50mg daily**



**For more information about this prescription plan, press 1. To speak with a healthcare advocate about this prescription plan, press 2.**

*[selection dialing 2]*

**ROBOT 2 VOICE: This call may be monitored for quality assurance.**

*[hold music]*

**AMY: Hello! Vanguard Estates Medical, this is Amy speaking. How may I help you?**

Finally, an actual person.

**NARR: Hi, yeah, I'm calling about my dad?**

**AMY: Marcus Jones, is that correct?**

**NARR: Yep, that's him. I've noticed that you've added a couple medications to his list recently, and I'm just wondering if I can get my dad off of some of them? I just don't think they're helping.**

**AMY: I understand your concern. Vanguard Estates policy states that family members aren't authorized to make changes to the medical plan for any resident.**

**NARR: But... he's my dad.**

**AMY: I understand that. Vanguard Estates policy states that family members can't make changes to medical plans. I can direct you to the medical release forms you signed that explain the policy in more detail, if you like?**

**NARR: So I can't make any changes, ever, at all?**

**AMY: That's correct. The release form clearly states that all medical decisions are made using state-of-the-art medical technology and in consultation with the world's best doctors, and are non-negotiable. It's in the best interest of the patient to stay consistent with our care plans. You can request a formal review, but there is a waitlist that's currently... about 17 months.**

**NARR: So what you're telling me is that your facility's robots can give my father whatever medication they want, and there is nothing that he or I can do about it?**

**AMY: I wouldn't describe it that way... but yes, that is essentially the policy.**

You weigh your options here. You could argue with her, but you doubt Amy can do very much for you. You think about asking for her supervisor. But instead, you ask Amy a question:

***NARR: Would you let your parents live at Vanguard Estates, Amy?***

***AMY: (pause) I can't really answer that question. Is there anything else I can help you with today?***

***NARR: No, I guess there isn't.***

***AMY: All right then, have a great day!***

*[click]*

*[solemn notes play quietly]*

The argument replays in your head over and over again for the next week. You think you should have been more forceful. Maybe you should get Imani to call. She's always been better at standing her ground. Customer service calls made you jumpy, anxious, easily flustered. But in the end, it doesn't matter. Your father dies two weeks after your call with Amy. The last full conversation you have with him, the last glimpse of his old self, is when he's ranting about his neighbor cheating at poker.

You make sure there are no candles, or robots, at his funeral.

**END**

*[solemn music continues]*

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## 24. Keep His Secret

You let it go and cross every finger and toe that your father doesn't get chlamydia. He's being checked out regularly by doctors anyway, right? Surely they'd catch it, especially if it's going around.

*[soft piano music plays]*

For a while, you cringe every time you click Drop-In, praying to a god you don't believe in that you don't witness a repeat. And you don't. Dad keeps you up to date on his days, and slowly you start to hear the same name more and more in his stories. *Patricia*. They play cards together. He says she always cheats. You remind him that *he* cheats every time you've ever played cards. They go to movie nights, and she has opinions about cars and prog rock that you don't really understand but nod along to.

You tease him a little about her, at first. Ask when you'll get to meet her, to give her the "get my father home by curfew speech" he delivered to your dates so many times. Then one day, when you Drop-In, he's not alone. There's a woman on the couch next to him, fiddling with her hands. He introduces her with a sheepish smile and sits down next to her, handing her a mug of tea.

***DAD (nervous): I thought it might be time for you to meet Patricia.***

Patricia is slight, with a crisp white bob. She answers your questions with short, clipped sentences. At first, you think she's maybe a little bit mean, until you realize that she's nervous. Your father leans into her a little bit, cracks a joke about some mutual friend of theirs at Vanguard that you don't really understand, and you see her shoulders relax a little. You smile too, trying to convey as much warmth in your voice as you can. As the conversation loosens up, you learn about her — her kids, her jewelry refurbishing business that she still runs out of Vanguard, her dislike of tomatoes, and her love of cats.

When she mentions that she hates scented candles, you jokingly ask your dad when the wedding will be, and he gets a serious look on his face.

***DAD: We have thought about it.***

He takes Patricia's hand.

***DAD: But I thought, you know, maybe you'd think it was... too soon.***

*[music changes to electronic, ethereal]*

He sounds nervous. Like he's waiting for you to laugh at him. Your mother died when you were 20, and your father never remarried. You always thought that was romantic, but now, watching your father grin sheepishly at this tiny woman by his side, you wonder if you

should have encouraged him to get out more. To meet someone like her earlier. Before the end was so close.

***DAD: Would you come? If we did something small? [sheepish] You don't have to; I know you're busy. It's a silly thing, really. It's fine.***

It stings a little that your dad thinks you might not come to his wedding. Even if it's a silly thing. Which it's not, you realize. He's met someone who makes him happy. Who he wants to spend the rest of his time with.

You tell him you'll be there, no matter what.

Your dad and Patricia have a little ceremony a few months later. You help him pick out a ring for her. There's a robot DJ, and you give a speech in front of everyone that does not include the time you accidentally saw your father and Patricia doing it on the couch. Even Imani seems moved by the whole thing.

Patricia dies a few months later from pancreatic cancer, and your father follows shortly after. You have their wedding vows printed out and hang them up in your house. You hope that, one day, you'll find a love like that, a love that was the right thing at the right time, no matter how short-lived it might be.

**END**

*[outro music plays, quizzical and haunting]*

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## 25. Report Him

You log in to your portal and submit a ticket for “additional health information” to the robots, letting them know that your father was getting more action than you are and should probably be checked for STIs. It doesn’t feel good to narc on your dad’s sex life, but you’re genuinely worried about his health.

*[soft electronic notes play]*

A few days later, you see that he’s clear for all STIs and breathe a sigh of relief. But when you next Drop-In on your dad, he’s cold. *[chime]* Finally, it comes out.

***DAD: I didn’t take you for a tattletale.***

You try to explain that you were worried about his health. That you gave him a chance to explain, to come clean, and that he lied. Or didn’t remember. Both of which made you nervous. But he’s not having any of it.

***DAD: You dropping in was supposed to feel like you stopping over for coffee, not like you being my parole officer.***

He sets his mug down on the coffee table and rubs his temples.

***DAD: I think I’d like you to disable the Drop-In function. You said earlier that you could turn that off, right? Let’s do that.***

You try to convince him to let you keep it. You’ve gotten attached to your chats, your little coffee dates. But he’s insistent. You broke an unspoken rule. You violated his trust and ratted him out to his robot overlords. You no longer get to have a key to stop by any time. You don’t like it, but you honor his request, and disable Drop-In. *[click]*

*[music changes to thoughtful aural waves]*

It’s lonely without access. You find yourself hovering over a grayed-out Drop-In button, wondering what your dad is up to. You call him sometimes, but usually he doesn’t answer. Even before he started losing his memory, he would lose his phone in the couch cushions for days. You wonder if he doesn’t pick up because he can’t find his phone, or because he doesn’t want to talk to you.

Days stretch to weeks between your chats. That window you had into his life is gone. For a moment, you thought you might have had a lovely final run with your dad. A kind, open connection to ride off into the sunset. But now you’re stuck reading recaps from the robots, humorless, bland notes detailing his interactions. You hope he’s as happy as their algorithm says he is.

When he dies, you find out from an alert in the Vanguard app. It’s pastel blue, soft, and clearly designed by a committee.

At his funeral, you meet Patricia. The woman you saw him with. She's wearing a ring your father gave her, a symbol of his love. A love you never got to witness firsthand. She shakes your hand coolly and then moves on. You want to apologize to her, to thank her, to say something. But you don't. Because you don't know her. You don't know any of these people sharing stories about your dad's antics and kindness.

You realize that by the end, maybe even the robots knew your father better than you did.

**END**

*[outro music plays, quizzical and haunting]*

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## 26. Break the News

You can't bring yourself to keep this from him, so you explain what happened. He listens, as you tell him you don't actually know if he's part of the hack or not. You'd have to look into it. His eyes narrow and he stops you.

**DAD: Don't look into it.**

*[dissonant wavy notes play]*

You're not sure what to say. Your dad shrugs.

**DAD: I'm glad you told me. But that's all I need to know.**

You ask him if he's sure. You *can* talk about it, talk about your options. You would look into it, if he asked you to.

**DAD: No. No really, it's... [takes a breath] It's really fine. I don't have privacy anymore, really. The robots see everything, so why not some random people on the Internet? It's not like I've ever met them. So, can we just... let's just pretend this never happened.**

*[music changes to quizzical and haunting]*

You end the call, relieved you aren't going to spend the next few days combing through those videos. As you go to bed, you think of your dad, shuffling in his ancient blue bathrobe to take his nightly bath. You can only hope that no one's watching.

**END**

*[outro music continues with more beat, quizzical and haunting]*

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*[music concludes]*

## 27. Keep Quiet

You don't tell him. What good would it do? You don't even know if his footage is up there anyway.

*[calm yet cheerful electronic notes play]*

The conversation moves on, and you talk about your job. His friends at Vanguard. The upcoming movie night. How much he hates whoever picks the movies for said movie night. You sign off promising to call again next week, and to smuggle him some of his favorite contraband candies when you visit next.

After your call, the transcript is added to his file under the “Family Contact” tab. There’s a green smiley face next to it, indicating that the algorithms have determined that the conversation was a positive one. “Resident happiness is directly correlated with positive family contact,” the page cheerily reminds you. Apparently, the bots haven’t quite figured out how to tell when that family contact is lying.

**END**

*[music continues]*

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*[music concludes]*