

# ***The Journey To Love Version 7.0***

(Based entirely on the 1987 movie *Mannequin*—A “true” *Mannequin* Fan-Fiction)

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A project of *The TJTL Project*:

[http://s88890090.onlinehome.us/The\\_TJTL\\_Project](http://s88890090.onlinehome.us/The_TJTL_Project)

Prologue  
In My Wildest Dreams

Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia  
A long time ago...  
Sometime before lunch

*Alexandra Tilbrook, I know you're in there!*

“Oh, please, gods,” Alexandra said, “please get me out of this,” while wrapped up in a celebratory robe, usually for pagan ceremonies. Alexandra was pagan, a Wiccan of sorts, but she was keeping it a secret from her community and her parents because of fear of retribution from them, for being a witch.

“You’ve turned down the blacksmith,” her mother stated. “You’ve turned down the governor’s cook, you’ve turned down the jeweler. There is just one man left. You’re gonna marry Nathaniel.” “What does he do?” she asked. “He’s a fuel merchant,” her mother stated. “*Mother*,” she said in refusal. “All right,” her mother said, “he sells horse dung.”

Alexandra then jumped out from the area where she was, still wrapped up in the robe, said “I want to do things, I want to invent things. I want to do things women have never done before.” “Sure,” her mother said, “and I want to smoke and tell your father to go to hell. Alexa, darling, if we women could do anything, I wish we could.” “But,” Alexa tried to interrupt. “No, no, these are the times that we live in,” her mother tried to correct.

“I want to go out, invent things, do things never done before,” Alexa said, continuing with “Oh, please gods, please get me out of this...” “Sure,” her mother replied sarcastically, “the James River is overflowing. There’s an oil shortage. The governor has bunions on his feet. Those ‘gods’ that you believe in got better things to worry about than you!”

Then a crack of thunder, a flash of lightning and then Alexa disappeared, leaving behind the robe, all crumpled up on the basement floor. Her mother then went toward the floor, kneeling down then gathering up the robe, crying softly “*Alexa?*”

Alexa had been throughout time, back and forth from her current time in 1805, back in time to way into the future. Where her final form is to be found, that would have yet to be seen...

One  
Another Day, Another Dollar, Another Dollar

City of Virginia Beach, Virginia  
Today

“Another day, another dollar,” I said as I clocked out of my current job, a simple part-time job through my clubhouse program, Beach House, which I was doing work at Burger King doing dining room duties. All I had to do was to clean up after customers, place ice in the ice dispenser, and make sure that the soda fountain dispensers have enough syrup in order to have drinks for the customers. Speaking of the soda dispensers, I have to wear gloves in order to change the syrup because that stuff is *caustic*. I heard that it can eat the paint job off of a car.

It was my payday, I just received my paycheck. Even though, I had enough money in my checking account to buy a quick lunch, snack, whatever you want to call it, because it was about 2:30 in the afternoon.

I walked up to the counter with my Visa check card in hand, stated to the cashier that I wanted a Tendercrisp chicken sandwich, plain, with *only* mustard and pickles. I also wanted a large strawberry milkshake. Since I can get a half-off discount, I paid way less than a normal customer would. I was told my total, then I handed her my Visa card, she swiped it and I was handed my receipt to sign, which I signed it, got my sandwich and milkshake, then headed out toward the bus stop. I knew that I had to head off to the bank (which my bank is Navy Federal Credit Union) to deposit it. I was thinking of getting a loan there also. Of course, I could go online to Account Access and do it there, but I can get much more personalized service at the credit union and possibly the loan quicker without a tedious process. If I didn't make my trip to the bank, I would have easily cashed it instead at a check cashing place and have some instant spending cash, but I decided not to. I headed off toward a bench outside toward my bus stop, because I needed to eat.

I opened my bag, because I knew that I had at least fifteen to twenty minutes before my bus came to take me back to Beach House or toward the area of the Virginia Beach Central Library, in which where the Navy Federal Pembroke Member Service Center is (customers at a credit union are called “Members,” because they partly own the credit union, also). I sat down at the bench, opened the wrapper to my sandwich, but before I even placed one bite in my mouth, I thought to myself, “*Denn du bist, was du ißt.*” This means, in English from German, “Because you are what you eat.” I placed my MP3 player, a Creative Labs MuVo 128 megabyte USB 1.1/2.0 flash drive-style device, on my neck with its neck cord, placed my headphones on my ears and pressed and held down the play/pause/power button until my first track, the Sega CD BIOS music started. I decided to skip ahead a few tracks, because a couple of paychecks ago, I bought a CD from Amazon.com (Chris Difford's *I Didn't Get Where I Am*) and since I didn't feel like pirating the tracks from LimeWire, I ripped the tracks using Windows Media Player, into 64 kbit/second WMA files. This format saves space on my MP3 player.

I was listening to Rammstein's “Sonne” on my player, and finished off the last few bites of my sandwich, placed the wrapper in the bag and placed the bag with wrapper in the nearby trash receptacle. I saw the bus that I needed, the #29 Lynnhaven (used to be called the #29 Rosemont because it started at Pembroke East and went down Rosemont Road) and it was heading the way I needed to go, toward the Hilltop transfer station, where it meets up with the #20 going toward Downtown Norfolk. That was the bus, the #20, I needed. I had a 30-day Seniors/Disabled fare card (those things cost me a

good \$35), so I didn't need a transfer when I boarded. I just swiped it, showed my half-fare ID (which Beach House took me to get a few months ago) and had a seat.

When we got toward the Hilltop station, where it meets up with the #20, I went toward the stop in front of the Cash Converters (used to be an independent pawn shop until it went out of business) and waited. Gave me a good chance to choke down a cigarette. Right when I was finished with the cigarette, the #20 came by. I extinguished my cigarette, and boarded the bus toward the Central Library. Since it was an extremely mild day outside, I thought I could make it home walking, since Pembroke Mall and the area that I live in, Pembroke Manor, is a very short distance from the bank, and get home, take a shower and get what I want with this loan that I would be getting.

I walked into the bank, went into line and pulled out my CUCARD, which can be used as identification at the bank. When I waited about five minutes (the wait was very short), heard a teller ask "Next member, please," I went to the window, swiped my CUCARD in the reader, entered in my PIN, then she asked me what she could do for me. I asked to deposit the paycheck into my account. She asked me to sign it, then I presented it to her for deposit. She took one quick look at the check, asked "Savings or checking?" I tried my best to decide which was the *best* option and account to deposit it into. I tried to hesitate, but I quickly blurted out "Checking." But before she put the entire amount into my checking account, I paused her for a moment and said that I wanted \$15 back in cash. She put the remainder of the check into my checking account, and gave me \$15 in cash back to me. She then handed me my receipt and it stated that I had about \$350 in my checking account. That was more than I have ever had in the middle of the month. Then she asked me if I had any other business, but I stated that I did not, then she told me to have a nice day.

Of course, I could have left the bank that very moment and get out, but I saw something that I *really* wanted on the Web. Of course, I knew that I had one of those "cheap" inflatable love dolls, but this was much more. It was something called a "RealDoll." Of course, the Hustler "Virtual Girl" foam-based love doll that I could get online, which costs about \$500, very much "cookie cutter." But this RealDoll that I wanted cost about \$6,500 plus about \$500 for shipping. I read the FAQ's and the required ordering info on their site, RealDoll.com, so I wanted something *really* custom. I could choose any body type, from an "petite" type 5-foot-1 34A to a "fantasy" 5-foot-7 54FF, and everything in-between, from a lap dancer, to a supermodel. I could choose the type of face that I wanted, the hair color, the eye color, *everything* about the doll. But these are falling in the scope of "mannequins" and not "love dolls," hence the \$6,500 price tag. Since I do not have to worry about "blowing up" the doll (inflating it), worry about punctures (and finding a repair kit to patch a hole) or even worrying about a large hole in an area and cannot be fixed. I have already went through three other inflatable love dolls, all ending up in the trash because they got holes in them and could not be fixed.

So, before going online and blowing *another* twenty bucks on another inflatable love doll that might do the same, before I left the bank, I stopped off at the member service counter, presented my state ID (because I needed an ID to get service there) and asked what I could do to get a loan. I was handed some paperwork and then I was told that a representative will "be with me shortly." I have already promised the unit that maintains the paystubs and their copies that I would *always* return the paystub the next day. But it's without the check portion, that's at Navy Federal. I got told one time that I would have to try to include the check portion in my copy, but Debbie Amme understood that it would be more feasible to let me deposit the check in the bank *first*, then return the next day with the stub, copy it, and have the money to spend.

So, I filled out the loan application. Just a few simple questions. Savings account number or Access Number, name on account, occupation and place of work, loan amount, purpose of loan, payment plan, a few others. I put down my savings account number, my name, the place where I work (Burger King) and my occupation (Foodservice)... but when it came to the loan amount, I was wondering how much to put down without looking like a complete fool to the member service representative. Of course, I would need at *least* \$7,000 to cover the costs of the mannequin, doll, *whatever*, shipping and *some* clothes, even though that the site's FAQ says that you should not get clothes for the thing *until* it arrives and when you get a "feel" for dressing and undressing it. It already comes clothed, in a bra, panties, thigh-high stockings, a mini dress, and high-heeled shoes. I put down \$7,000. Should be enough.

Now for the "purpose" of the loan. I couldn't put down the "fact" that it was for a *very expensive* mannequin, nor a car, because I don't have a license; but what? I *could* put down that it was for a new computer and new gaming systems, but what if they needed a receipt to prove what I had bought? I then glanced down to the fine print, and it said that receipts were only needed for loans for \$10,000 and more. So, a little "white lie" with the credit union wouldn't hurt... I hope. I put down that the loan was for a "new computer and new next-gen video game systems... and clothes."

Now for the payment plan. It gave me a few choices of automatic payments from savings or checking, mailed payments (will show payment amount with statement) or in-person payments at a member service center. Since I could pay my loan the instant that I deposit my paycheck, and when my Social Security check comes in every 3<sup>rd</sup> of the month, I put down automatic \$50 payments on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and every two weeks on Wednesdays, two months after the first day of the loan.

I then signed the loan application, verifying that under penalty of perjury, that my information is correct and true to the best of my knowledge. I was called about a minute or so later to an office. I was nervous.

She asked me for my ID, and if necessary, my CUCARD, so she could get my Access Number off of it. She pressed a few keys into a computer and asked why I needed or wanted this loan. I started to get fidgety in my seat, but had to quickly stop myself. I told her "The PlayStation 3, Xbox 360 and the Nintendo Revolution are coming out soon, and I want a new computer, because the Pentium II computer that I have is not enough for these newer games, such as *Doom 3* and such. I also want a Macintosh. I also need the money for some new clothes, because my clothes that I now have gotten tattered." She then put my full explanation of why I wanted the loan into the computer. A few seconds later, a message popped up on her screen. It said that my loan was approved. A very odd sight. After all, I *am* a member of this credit union and established members get better approval rates than newer members. She was going to have the loan officer draft out a draft for \$7,000 so I could do anything I could please with it, but I asked her if there was another option. "Sure," she said, "I can directly deposit this into one of your accounts, or make this a NavChek loan, if you want." I told her to make it a NavChek loan. "Okay then," she stated, "You will get checks especially for this loan. You cannot use your regular checks with your Sharechek account, if you want to use the loan. You'll get them within five to seven business days." Then she asked me if I had any further business. I said that I had none. She then made my loan a NavChek loan, then sent me on my way with important paperwork and informational brochures on my selected type of loan. I walked out.

Of course, I *could* use the loan for “its intended purpose,” but I knew better. I wanted this RealDoll mannequin/love doll thing ever since I was browsing through Wikipedia a few months ago, before I even got this TEP through Beach House. Of course, I had to wait quite a few days before my loan checks came in the mail because my Visa check card *only* has a \$2,500 daily purchase limit plus a \$400 daily ATM withdrawal limit. After all, the card is a debit card and not a credit card.

I was going home, trying not to laugh my ass off because I “lied” to the bank to get a loan. But hey, why tell a bank that you’re getting a *very expensive* mannequin, because you will be laughed out of the office!

Of course, I had to keep very secret to my family (my mother and sister, my brother moved on out a few weeks ago to his own place, peace in the house at last) that I had got a loan.

For the next few days, of course, I was working my required hours, and when I came home (I came home on the van on non-paydays, but went home from the bank on paydays), I always checked the mail.

That next Tuesday, my NavChek checks had arrived in the mail, along with Mom’s Sprint PCS bill, a ShopWise flyer with the weekly Food Lion flyer (so we can see which sodas are cheap that week) and a piece of mail from Social Security for me (probably the same ‘ol stuff saying about that damned “overpayment”). I quickly separated the checks from the “other” mail. I placed the packet of checks in my room, under the pillow and handed the rest of the mail to Mom.

I quickly entered into the RealDoll.com Web site, browsed around at the samples to see which one (even though they are truly custom) would “satisfy” me. I even looked at the pictures that I saved from that site earlier in my “My Pictures” folder in my document folder to get myself an “idea.” I then instantly clicked on the “order” link and then viewed the Flash demo on how to order the mannequin. When it finished, an error in Mozilla Firefox happened. It gave the error “This page must be viewed over a secure connection,” and told me that I should prefix the address with https:// instead of http://. No big, I could easily fix the address. I clicked in the Address bar, fixed the http to https, pressed Enter and I quickly started a new account.

Right after I finished the verification process by clicking on a link that was e-mailed to me, which I received in Mozilla Thunderbird, and it told me that my login was now active. I logged back in to the configurator, and started letting my fantasies take over.

Somehow, I felt that I was being overtaken by another force. Somehow, and I *knew* that it was not a by-product of my mental illness, I was being directed subconsciously to which face, which eye color, which eye liner and shadow, which hair color, style and length, which facial skin tone. Then I clicked on “Order complete doll.” They call it a doll, I call it a mannequin. Either way, it’s the same thing. I then selected the body type, a very athletic, medium-breasted figure, fair skin tone (which I also selected for the face skin tone), and then selected the (shall I say it?) the color of the pubic hair. Since this mannequin was going to have light brown hair, I selected brown pubic hair. I also kept it natural. I then clicked on the button to finish, then I was told that I would be contacted in three days to confirm my order. If I didn’t get contacted after three days, I would have to call them back because they use spam filters to filter out bogus requests and junk e-mail. I was given a form to print and mail, when they contacted me. I printed two copies, one to send as requested, one for my records.

When I exited out of the configurator, I was going to be sent a mannequin that will be five-foot-four, 34C chest, with a face that they call "Rui," but I'm going to name it Alexandra, light brown hair, shoulder length and straight, blue eyes, "natural" lips, and a French manicure. I left most of the doll's "features" natural, without added makeup, because if I feel like it one day, I may add temporary makeup to "suit the mood."

Two days later, since it was my day off from both work and Beach House, I got a call on my home phone. Good timing, I thought it was. The phone rang its long distance ring, and the name on the Caller ID said "Abyss Creations," the actual manufacturer of the mannequins. I picked up the phone, and answered with my generic "Hello?" greeting.

"Yes, may I speak to Kevin Havens?" a female voice asked. "This is he," I replied. She said "This is RealDoll.com confirming your order that you placed this past Wednesday for your doll. Did you send that order and are you serious on sending that order?" "Yes on both counts," I said back. She continued "Okay, this statement must be answered honestly. Do you affirm, by penalty of law, that you are at or above the age of eighteen years, and this type of material is not forbidden in the community in where you live?" "Yes, and yes," I said, without hesitation. She then told me the cost, which included shipping, which came out to be \$6,850, for a moment that I would pass out at the overwhelming price tag. I was then asked which mode of payment I was going to pay in. "Check," I said. She then told me to send the printed order form to the address on the form and include the check. She then thanked me for my order, then let me go.

I then went to the Miller Mart and got a postage stamp, three cans of Monster Energy drinks and a bag of sunflower kernels. I used my ATM card to pay for it. I then walked out of the store, after my items were bagged, then walked back down Independence Boulevard toward Hinsdale and then right onto King George Road.

After that, I then sent out my mail, but went to a mail drop off box near the mall to send the order off then went back home, surfed the Net, and then went back on to my normal day, if you want to call it that.

Now the wait would seem long, after all, the person on the phone *did* say that it would take anywhere from three to five weeks to finish up and get the doll to my place. Now keeping it a secret *would* be pretty difficult.

## Two

As They Say In A PS2 Game, "Press Start or **X** To Begin..."

Okay, three weeks had passed. I've been checking my e-mail, you could say "religiously," to see when they had shipped the mannequin. I had already put down the other half, so I knew that I had no turning back. I have already cleared out most of my NavChek line of credit, leaving me with some dough to buy some clothes for it, but it would have to seem that I would have to buy clothes for it at Wal-Mart. Now, now, don't think that I'm crazy. Wal-Mart's clothes are pretty decent. After all, the only sets of clothes that I want to buy for it are night clothes, a dress (more modest), patent leather boots, sneakers, maybe a pair of shorts and a T-shirt.

One day, after I got home from Beach House, I "turned off" my Weather Channel screensaver (which the weather was Fair and 85 degrees) and then opened Mozilla Thunderbird. I got the message that showed me the fact that my mannequin *just* got shipped that very morning.

The message said:

Subject: Shipping notification of your RealDoll.com order  
From: RealDoll.com Shipping Department <dollorders@realdoll.com>  
To: Kevin Havens <kevin.havens@s88890090.onlinehome.us>

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Dear Kevin:

This message is to notify you that your RealDoll, order # 8535937366 has been shipped this morning. This has been shipped Seko Freight Express.

An adult signature is required when the doll arrives, so someone over the age of 18 must be present when your shipment arrives..

Please visit our site at [www.realdoll.com](http://www.realdoll.com) and click on "Your Account" to track your shipment. Please note that we do not accept any phone calls asking for shipment tracking.

Yours truly,  
Debra  
RealDoll.com Shipping Department

I instantly clicked on the link in my message, searched around for the correct link to click, and then was taken to the page where I could place an order. However, there was this "hidden" link that was near the bottom of the page, which I found with tedious scrolling and trying hard to use Firefox's "Find" feature that finds text as you type, which found it after a few tries. I clicked on the link, and had to log in. Since it "partnered" with the shipping company to provide real-time status of the shipment as it was in-transit.

By looking at when the shipment, or better yet, "Alexandra," will arrive, the "estimated" arrival date would be next Tuesday. Tuesday?! I have to work that day! I *could* try to create some lie to not to be at work that day, because the Clubhouse Standards *do* say that members do have the right to back up service for any reason. My "reason" could be "Doctor's appointment." I don't know *who* right now, either Dr. Hill, my psychiatrist; Skip Santti, my therapist; my or Dr. Hipol, my family doctor, but it may



be done. Anyway, I don't have to provide proof about the "appointment," but I would have to provide some legitimate reason why I could not work that day.

So, going to work the rest of the week, checking each day where the shipment was every evening, and by Friday, the shipment was in Lexington, Kentucky. By that next Monday, the shipment was waiting in Richmond.

I was smart (or something like that) that Monday after I got back to Beach House. I have already alerted my supervisor that I had an "appointment" with the doctor that I have decided, Skip Santti, so I had to also alert the unit that done the TEP. They got the backup person to take my place, for at least a day.

Tuesday morning, I got up at my normal time, 6:30 in the morning. I didn't call in for the van or even signed up for it the previous afternoon. I got up, got dressed like I usually did, in my Burger King uniform to fool my mother, but when she left, I just dressed in a pair of blue jeans and a wrestling T-shirt.

I kept the curtains at a tiny crack, after I verified that Mom had truly left for the morning to work. Every simple engine noise that I heard alerted me, sometimes to near euphoria, only to be disappointed that it was a FedEx or UPS truck, a work truck or even some other delivery truck. Sometimes some people's cars even sounded like a truck engine. Every time I heard engine noise or even seen a simple shape of a vehicle in my peripheral vision, I'd quickly turn my head, only to see the vehicle whiz on by and then wait with even more anticipation.

About noontime, I was starting to get a bit worried. I was starting to think that I took a day off for nothing. Mom comes home about three in the afternoon, so I don't want to give it away, yet. So, I went to the kitchen to get myself some tater tots, made in the oven for a quick lunch or snack, whatever you may want to call it, a couple cans of Barq's root beer, and not to forget a longneck bottle of Busch beer. I downed the bottle of Busch while waiting for the oven to preheat.

When the oven (it uses digital temperature settings) beeped telling me that the oven was ready at 450 degrees, I placed the tots on the pizza pan, put the pan in the oven, set the timer for seventeen minutes and then went to the den to watch some news on WAVY TV 10. I was watching Jon Cash give his weather report. Looks like this weekend's gonna be fine.

I then went into the kitchen to make a ketchup-based sauce that was like a chili sauce, because it used chili seasonings like cumin and chili powder. When I was about to add the ketchup to the bowl and begin to stir it, I heard the doorbell ring.

I quickly glanced out of the window and saw this tractor trailer truck and then looked through the peephole. I saw a man with a hand truck with a *huge* crate and him holding a clipboard in another arm. I *knew* that my mannequin was *finally* here. Seems like that I didn't take a day off "for nothing," after all. I grabbed my wallet from my back pocket so just in case if the driver needed verification that I was over 18, like the e-mail said that an "adult signature" was required. I'm 28, and I look like I'm 16, maybe 17, sometimes a "day short" of 18. It all depends on the person that takes that first look at me.

"Ah, yes," the delivery truck driver said. "I have a delivery for a Kevin Havens, is that you?" "Yep," I said. He took an intriguing look at me and said "Wait a minute, you don't look of age. Can I see some ID?" I quickly flashed my ID, exposing the birthdate on

it, proving that I was born in 1977, way over 18. He said "Okay, you are over 18. You sure don't look like it. Well, sign where the 'X' is," and handed me the clipboard.

I glanced over the instructions because this was shipped "FOB Factory," so I knew what this meant. That meant that I had to inspect my package for any damage before accepting the delivery. I had the driver get out his crowbar and open the crate. I quickly looked over for any damage, found out that there was not a single scuff on the body, nor a tear in the clothing, so I gratuitously accepted it, signed the bill of lading, he took off with his hand truck, got in his truck and took off.

I had to carefully get the entire package into the house, wooden crate and all, in the meanwhile getting my tater tots out of the oven before they burnt, and then tearing down the crate with a 16 oz. claw hammer to get to the "prize" inside, in this matter, the mannequin that I waited about a month to get.

I had to clear out a bunch of packing material, then got to a piece of paper that had my invoice and a set of instructions on how to remove the "neck bolt," a safety measure to prevent breakage during shipping. I removed it with a crescent wrench, because I didn't have the correct tool (a metric wrench is what I needed) to remove the neck bolt. I then lifted her (now I can call it a "her" because she looks so freaking real, almost human) out of the crate and then carried her like a groom carries his new bride, through the threshold of my bedroom. I then placed the mannequin on my side of my bed, because the mannequin had the poise and posture of a person at sleep. She was quite heavy, but quite limp. She weighed about as much as her human equivalence. But, my current inflatable love doll that I got from some online sex toy store was still laying on what should be now the new "Alexa's" side of the bed. (I think I'll call her that, sounds better than calling her "Alexandra" or "Alex," because I think that women that are named Alexandra calling themselves "Alex" must be extreme tomboys.)

I quickly deflated the inflatable love doll, completely exhausting it of its air volume. I folded it up and placed it in the box that I had it shipped to me in, closed the box with United States Postal Service "Priority Mail" packaging tape. I securely closed that box to where it couldn't be opened without totally ripping apart the box. Scissors, maybe? Since I now have this much more sturdier mannequin that can double as a love doll, I don't have to worry about letting pins, knives or scissors near it, because this doll, okay, *mannequin*, is made out of silicone (that's why it cost so damn much!) and can be used in numerous ways. It is even water-safe! Try *that* with an inflatable doll! It won't collapse on me whatsoever!

I then took the mannequin's packaging materials out to a dumpster near my house. I had to make numerous trips. But, by about 1:15, I had all of the packaging materials in Tonic's (a bar) dumpster and then went on my way to say hello to this mannequin. I know that it is inanimate, but it was something that I have always wanted, and now it had become a true reality.

I even tried to say a few lines from a movie that I have watched on my PlayStation 2 a few nights ago, that I rented from Hollywood Video. "Did you know that you are looking more beautiful every second that I look at you?" I asked to the mannequin. I then leaned my head toward her, like she was trying to whisper something to me, then I asked "What's that? You wanna dance? Which song? Okay, 'Other World' by Glenn Tilbrook? Sure, why not? That's a great slow-dancing song." I quickly opened the "My Shared Folder" shortcut on my Windows XP desktop, which is the "My Music" icon and opened the "08 Other World.wma" song. I carefully lifted her up and off of my bed, placed her feet on mine, let Winamp start the song and we danced. Yes, I may have

looked like a complete idiot doing that, but it was just me and her and nobody else. That “Other World” song held true to the both of us: She was “dancing in my mind like an angel in ‘my other world’.”

I went to Beach House the next day, and lo and behold, I saw Jason Johnson there. He was trying to convince me to go out with this woman that he had been hell-bent on “setting me up” with. I had to flatly refuse, because I felt that I have this obligation to be with my new mannequin, Alexa, and no one else. Yes, it may have seemed stupid, but I knew that there was something else inside that silicone flesh and PVC skeleton. I felt that there was an actual person inside, but I didn’t know.

Jason said that he’ll be at my house with this woman, he knows where I live, this weekend. He knew where I live now because he rides the same van route as I. He said that he’ll be there this weekend. “*Not if my mother stops him first,*” I thought to myself, and then internally laughing because I know that Alexa will be there for me. I walked out to get a cigarette and then went, about 11:00 that morning, to work.

I went home that evening and then decided to strike up a conversation with Alexa. I know consciously that she can’t really listen, but in my heart I know that she *is*. Oh, *mein Herz brennt* for wanting Alexa to be real, not realistic-looking, but as *real* as a living, breathing person.

Only my hopes and wishes could be that high. Maybe it’s just me. Maybe this mannequin is different than those other RealDolls out there. It may be special, in its own sense. I just don’t know right now.

### Three Wake Me Up Inside

Weekend. Glad it finally came. The best thing about this weekend was that I could spend more time with Alexa, talk with her about my favorite show, *Small Wonder*, probably play some *Sonic The Hedgehog 2* on my PlayStation 2 with the game *Sonic Mega Collection Plus*, probably watch *Mannequin* (I own the DVD) with Alexa on the same system, do a lot of things with Alexa. The *bad* thing about this weekend is that damned idiot, Jason Johnson is going to attempt to bring this woman—I *told* him that I did not want to go out with her, I have Alexa, but he thinks that I'm lying. Well, he won't even know that I have something that he's been trying to restrict me from for *years* from buying. Thanks to a line of credit from my credit union, among other things, Alexa had become a reality. While Alexa is way different than a store mannequin (mannequins in stores are completely static and have no "inputs") and I was going to go to Wal-Mart this weekend to buy a 3.1 megapixel digital camera and post some photos on some site that I found for owners of RealDolls. Maybe a few pictures of it in front of my computer, hand on mouse, on some site (realdoll.com is one choice, rammsteinshop.de is another); maybe holding my PS2 controller or even showing some pictures of it in some fashion.

It was about three in the afternoon, and my mother and sister took off toward somewhere. I was thinking of going, but Mom said that when I go to the Commissary with her, I *always* pick up loads of energy drinks and snacks. Of course, she understands that I do want to stash away some snacks for whenever I want to do some things, like stay up all night on my computer, on the Internet. Or if I want to do something. So, in other words, Mom said she'll take me to an ATM to pull out however much money I want to spend on my own stash, and then she'll take me back home and let me do whatever I wanted to do, mostly with Alexa, because Mom said that I spend more time with "it" (Mom calls it an "it," I call it a "her") than I do with the rest of my family. Of course, Mom was worried that this mannequin may take up much of my free time and probably diminish my social skills. My social skills? I have quite a good base of friends at Beach House, minus the assholes that grate my nerves (like Jason Johnson and his insisting on me going out with this woman, which I keep on refusing, but he still keeps on going on, even when one staff member told him to stop), so Alexa, even though that she is inanimate, with me talking to her, lets me vent the frustrations with the day-to-day things that go on in my life. As I said before, she may not really listen in reality, but in my heart she *is*. Yes, my heart burns (that's what *mein Herz brennt* means) long, hard and painfully for her to be a real person, but it's a feeling that I have been having for quite some time.

Mom and my sister went out to the Commissary, with a list of her groceries, a list of my stash groceries (which included a 24-pack of Coke, quite a few of energy drinks, get a case if possible; Pringles, Whoppers candies, White Chocolate Reese's, Peanut Lover's Chex Mix, among some other snack items. I pulled out \$60 and asked her to get me some cigarettes with the money left over.

When I truly verified that Mom and Sis left, I closed my bedroom door. I pulled out of the Wal-Mart shopping bag a blouse that was blue and a skort that was white. I tore the tags off of the clothes (the tags with the UPC code and the designer's name, not the tags inside) and said "Oh, come on, Alexa, whatsa matter? You don't like these clothes I picked up for you?"

Suddenly, I saw Alexa rise up from her position in the bed without any assistance from me, not anyone. There was no evidence of cabling, motors or any

mechanical assistance. She started to look as real as a real human. "Not really," Alexa said, "but I'll wear it."

I then got up, stumbling over books, my nightstand, my fan, almost everything in my backwards-walking path. I exclaimed "*Shit!* How... how didja do that?"

Alexa said "You've finally liberated me! Two hundred years of traveling in each decade has finally come to an end!" I knew that I just downed a couple of bottles of Bawls, because I went to CompUSA on my way home (Mom let me) and bought a case of 12. I had drank a couple of them on the way back home. "The excessive caffeine. The guarana. I've gotta stop drinking excessive amounts. Why, I don't know. I'm having a hallucination." I then fell into Alexa's lap, where she was, and then started to cradle me. She then started to finger-comb my hair and then started to rub the back of her hand against my face. I simply could not have believed what was happening to me at that very moment. While she was doing that, she asked me "Does this feel like a hallucination to you?"

We then started to go on throughout the house. This was not a tour of any sort, but it was a feeling of that I finally got myself a true girlfriend, one that would not get on my bad side of the things and vices that I do and have, and especially a girlfriend that was not classified as a "pen pal," as much as the "other" girlfriends that Jason Johnson set me up with, or even "girlfriend standardizing" (more like "girlfriend bastardizing") that Melanie Lowell, the person who pussy whips Jason Johnson, thinks that all relationships should go by her "standards."

No, this was just me and Alexa doing the things that we wanted to do. Back in my room, I gave her the blouse and skort that I was going to give her, but she stripped right in front of me. "Go in the bathroom and change," I said. "Looking at you naked while you were a mannequin was one thing, but you as a human is another." "You weren't afraid of looking at me like this before," she said. "You weren't as real back then," I replied, then placed the back of her blouse against the front of her body.

A few minutes later, Alexa was dressed in the blouse and skort that I bought for her, and she looked good. "Alexa," I said. She replied "How'd you know my name?" "I named you 'Alexandra'," I said. "You named good, or guessed my name real well when you bought me," Alexa said. "I was born with that name. I was born August 29, 1777, in Williamsburg, Virginia, so that should make me 228, next week!" "I'll bake a cake," I replied, with sarcasm. "But for now, you're just going to turn 28, so just keep your age that you left off at." "Not a problem," Alexa stated.

I then started to pick up my copy of *The Macintosh Bible* to read off a section on the Internet, especially on the Mac. Of course, I was going to read the appendix on how to convert from Windows to the Mac OS later on, maybe breeze from the chapter on the Internet toward the appendix describing about transferring from Windows to the Mac. But when I started to pick up my book, Alexa took one look at it and started to cringe. "A *Bible*? A *Bible*? Eeeew. Get that thing away from me!" "What, Alexa?" I asked. "You've got a Bible in your hands. I hate to tell you this, but I'm a pagan." "So?" I asked. "I'm a pagan myself. Merry meet," I said and then showed her the book on Wicca that I had laying in my nightstand. "Oh," Alexa said. "Then I have nothing other to say than 'Merry meet' myself!" "By the way," I added, "This is a computer book, on the Macintosh computer, *nothing* about Christianity in this book, just topics on how to use a Mac." Then Alexa said "I don't know why somebody would call a computer book a 'bible'." "Don't ask me," I said. I then read the chapter on the Internet then flipped to the appendix.

A few minutes later, after Alexa and I got into an intense kissing session, the phone rang. It said "Johnson Jason" on the Caller ID display. I was debating with myself to pick it up, and I announced that this person who is calling wants to set me up with some wheelchair-bound person that really doesn't care about who I am, but what I am, and also wants me to completely stop smoking and drinking. When I told Alexa those "facts," she stated that if I picked up the phone, she would turn back into a mannequin. She told me to let the answering machine pick it up.

Going by Alexa's wishes, I let the answering machine pick up the call from him, It went "Kevin, I know you're there. Pick up. Don't make me come over there. Anyway, I know that you may be home in a few minutes, so me and this person that Melanie and I want to set you up with are coming over in, oh, about thirty minutes. Be there. Okay, wait for us. We'll see you in a few. Okay, bye."

"Oh... shit," I said. "What?" asked Alexa. "I don't want him to know that you are here and that you're my girlfriend," I stated. "If he found out, shit will hit the fan!" "He won't and he never will," Alexa said. "You're not going to answer that door under any circumstances." "How are we going to do *that*?" I asked.

Alexa was planning with me on how to completely avoid him. Since the curtains in the den cannot let people look inside on what we are doing, but we can see out, somewhat. Alexa and I went on our knees on the sofa, looking straight out of the window.

We were waiting a few minutes (about twenty, to be exact), until I saw Jason Johnson pushing a wheelchair-bound person down the street from the area of the mall. Alexa whispered to me "*Is that the bitch that he and his 'girlfriend' want to set you up with?*" "Yes," I whispered back. "Answer the door," Alexa said, "I'll turn back into my original form. Just don't let him in." "And why do you want me to answer the door?" I asked "Just do it," Alexa insisted, "but carry me in one of your arms and let him know that I'm yours and no one else's. And also on the fact that you don't want to be set up with her. Also, have a lit cigarette in your hand." "Not a problem," I stated.

About a minute later, the doorbell rang. Alexa turned back into her RealDoll form. As requested by her, I picked her up, even though that it had to take both hands to initially do it, but then I got her to rest in my left arm, then lit one of my Camels. I answered the door.

"You sick bastard," said Jason, who greets people like that, never "Hello" or "How you're doing" or anything polite if it doesn't apply "correct" to his "standards," which are also Melanie Lowell's standards. "Oh," Jason continued, "you have to put out that cigarette and put down that... that *thing* before going outside to talk to us." "No," I firmly stated. "That *thing* is *my* girlfriend and she appreciates me for who I am and not what you and that... that abomination that you want to set me up with, not to forget that *slut* Melanie, think of what I am." The woman in the wheelchair said "How dare you call me an 'abomination'! That is a mannequin! How could a mannequin 'appreciate' you for who you are? It doesn't even think, feel or even *breathe* for that matter!" "Well," I replied, almost sarcastically, "at least Alexa doesn't get on my bad side for smoking or drinking, unlike how you, Melanie and Jason do."

This woman then declared "Well, then if he's gonna act like this, let him love up on his mannequin, smoke and drink until he ends up in hell. He *ain't* going out with *me*, for what it's worth." I replied "Well, for judging me by your humanistic standards, I

hope *you* three, including Melanie, go to hell! Did you *ever* read in your Bible that you cannot judge, only your god can judge?” Jason said “Well, before he decides to fight with me even worse, probably bite me, let’s go before it gets way too out of hand.” They left. I closed the door, going “Bye, you assholes. I hope that *all three of you* rot in hell. I’m glad that it even didn’t start.”

Alexa then emerged back to life from her RealDoll form and said “Damn, is that *all* that he does? Tries to set up people totally *incompatible* with each other?” “Yep,” I stated. “And by what I know, all she and I would do is *never* see each other past that initial meet, then it would be purely telephone-only conversations from there on.” “That’s not a true girlfriend,” Alexa said. “By the way, why can’t you be seen by other people?” I asked. “Ask them,” Alexa stated, pointing upwards.

By the time Mom and my sister came home from the Commissary, Alexa had already trekked upstairs, changed back into her RealDoll form and then I helped Mom with putting groceries to where they needed to go to.

After that initial bringing to life episode, further on that evening, Alexa never re-emerged from her RealDoll form. After reading a few pages of my *Mac Bible*, I kissed Alexa on the cheek, turned off my bedside lamp, then whispered “Night, Alexa. Hope to see you in the morning.”

#### Four

#### Was This Incident A One-time Thing? Maybe Not...

I went to Beach House the Monday after and was wanting to tell a select few about what happened this past weekend. But who would I tell? Who would believe me? And will Jason Johnson debunk my story? (Probably.) But I *do* know that there may be a few people, other than the staff, that may believe me. I know a few people at Beach House that *know* (besides Jason Johnson, he found out on surprise) that I got this RealDoll thing and how I wished for it to come to life (which it did for a few hours this past Saturday), but some of them assured me that I've been watching a bit too much *Mannequin*.

I knew that I had one person that I could confide in, Adam, I knew him ever since my very first day (1996, that is) that we have kept a few secrets from staff and a few of the "other" members. He *may* believe me, he may not.

I saw Adam in the smoker's area (off by the side door) listening to his multi-band radio, on Tommy & Rumble. Whenever he and I meet each other at Beach House, I go out for a smoke and sometimes he comes along and brings his radio and we listen to FM99 together.

I was debating with myself whether or not to tell Adam about my RealDoll, which he knew that I have already named Alexa, which came to life unexpectedly Saturday afternoon while my mother and sister were at the Commissary.

"Adam," I started to talk. "Yeah, Kevin?" replied back Adam. I started with "It's kinda hard to explain, but you know that RealDoll thing that I bought a few weeks ago, which arrived earlier this week?" "Yeah," he replied, "did something go wrong with it, did it get a tear and deflate on you?" "No," I said, "the thing's a solid silicone structure. I don't know how to put this, but..." "I'm listening," said Adam, "whatever you say I won't say to anyone else." "Lean your head closer," I said, "I don't want anyone else hearing this."

Adam leaned his head a bit closer to near my chin, and I said "It's kinda hard to explain, let alone hard to believe, but... I can't say it." "Naw," Adam went, "anything you say I believe, well, except for a few things that you lied to me about before."

I was stammering trying to say the fact that Alexa came to life for a couple of hours this past weekend, but it was hard to say it. "Okay," I said, "Alexa..." I stopped there while looking in my peripheral vision that Jason Johnson came up to park his bike and lock it to a light pole. "Alexa' what?" Adam said. I said "Let's get a bit away from this area. It looks kinda hot right now." "What do you mean," Adam asked, "It's kinda cool in here." "No," I said, "what I mean by 'hot' is that I can see the ears listening when we talk. Anyway, Jason Johnson's coming nearby."

While I saw Jason Johnson walk toward the door, while Adam and I were walking away to be discussing a certain thing I want kept private, Jason told me to stop what I was doing and come talk to him. "Fsck off," I said, and kept walking. I used the Unix shell command, fsck, in replacement of the "real" F-word, I pronounce it "fisk." Wikipedia has other official pronunciations of the term.

"Okay," I said after I knew that I have seen that no one was around to even catch a listen onto what Adam and I were talking about, "Alexa... came to life for a couple of hours this past Saturday." "Get outta here," Adam said, "that cannot be true!" Then



Jason Johnson came closer... and closer, until he came up, stopped off in between us, and stated "You set me up! You created some lie with Adam telling him that your mannequin came to life just to prevent me and this girl that I was going to set you up with coming in!" "No," I interrupted, "I did not. She, well, Alexa, did come to life. Anyway, if my mother saw you at my house, she would have thrown a shit fit." "You need *serious* help," Jason said. "Who is your nurse?" "I don't go here for medical reasons," I said, "I have a private doctor." "You had another female there to provide 'Alexa's' voice, because I heard you and 'her' talking. You know what happens to liars. They go straight to hell." "Damn it, Jason," I said, "You've been so pussy-whipped by Melanie. I've already done something to protect me from your powerful energy. I put up an energy shield and you cannot penetrate it. And no, no one else was there, just Alexa and myself." "Oh, do shut up," Jason said. "And one more thing. You can continue to love up on your 'Alexa' because I am *not* setting you up with any more people! You can forget it!" He then stormed off.

"Okay, Kevin," Adam said after the coast was clear, "I do believe you. Is your RealDoll an animatronic? That's the only reason that I can think of." "No," I said, "she became 100% human. How, I dunno."

I then went on with the rest of my day, and then decided to go straight home right after work, because I wanted Alexa to hear what happened, if she can re-emerge from her RealDoll status to a human again.

The next weekend, right when Mom and my sister went to bed, I kept open my bedroom door, hoping for Alexa to re-emerge from her RealDoll status. "Probably this incident was just a one-time thing," I stated, then closed my bedroom door, about to get on my computer and surf the Web.

But, right after I closed my door, Alexa re-emerged from her lifeless status and laughed slightly. "You just don't get it, do you?" Alexa asked. "Alexa!" I exclaimed. "I thought that you were gone forever!" "Oh," Alexa said, "You're just about as bad as Bill. Never thought that computers would be so advanced to where you can visit the world while in your seat. He also thought that 640 KB was enough for anyone." "Bill Gates?" I asked. "Um-hum," said Alexa. "But he footed the bill for the Xbox! Windows! Even Internet Explorer!" "That was 1981," Alexa said. "So," I said, "you've been traveling throughout different years in different decades... until you landed here in 2005." "Right," she said, "and I've never found true love, until I met you."

Alexa then accidentally hit the "sleep" button on my clock radio and then some music filled the room. I had Adam spending the night, but he was downstairs asleep. "Where did you hide all these musicians?" Alexa asked, then started "grooving to the beat," for which I had the radio tuned to 93.7 Bob FM.

We then started to dance a bit silly throughout the house, and maybe re-enacting some scenes where Emmy and Jonathan were dancing quite silly. It even ended up outside, for a few minutes, because by then we had put a long headphone splitter (that I "borrowed" from Adam's bag) and we split my MP3 player. We *still* were dancing, until we woke Adam up. Alexa was behind me, but I didn't know that she returned back to her RealDoll form.

"Oh, hi, Adam," I said. "I want you to meet..." then I looked at Alexa, crouched on the floor, "...Alexa." "Oh, how nice," Adam stated, "I'll get Barbie and sometime we'll double." Adam went back to sleep while Alexa, after verifying that Adam went truly back to sleep, we went back upstairs.

I told Alexa “Alexa, Adam believes that you came to life, why didn’t you prove it in front of him?” Alexa insisted “For now, I can *only* be alive in front of you and only you. You’ll have to find out how I can be alive, you can say full-time, by yourself. For now, it’s just these temporary spurts of you and I together human-to-human.” “Aw, *scheiße*,” I said. “As I said,” Alexa said, “Ask them for assistance,” and pointed upwards again.

For the rest of the night, Alexa and I were watching Food Network on the TV and then I asked her to get me a drink out of my stash box, but she declared “*Ich hab’ keine Lust*.” I retorted “What do you mean ‘you don’t feel like it’ and since when did you know German?” “Oh, I dunno,” Alexa stated, “might have been that time I spent in Germany after the Berlin Wall fell in the 90’s. You know, I didn’t spend all of my time in the United States.” I then told her that my stash box is on her left, beside the bed. All she had to do was reach in the box, a Priority Mail parcel box, and get me a drink. She did so, then asked what I wanted. “Okay, PowerAde, Coke with Lime, Bawls or Full Throttle?”

I was trying to think it over. Without trying to make Alexa pissed off because I was taking my time, I told her that I wanted a Full Throttle, which is Coke’s take on an energy drink. “What’s it like?” Alexa asked. “I want to try one myself.” “It tastes very fruity,” I said. “It also has a lot of caffeine. Good place to start if you want to be geekified. After all, ‘Geek is sexy,’ I stress.” “Yes, I do agree,” Alexa said, “you *are* sexy. But I didn’t know that you were a geek. I thought geeks were a bad thing.” “That is so 80’s,” I said. “Geeks are a good thing these days.” “Oh,” Alexa said and then after we finished off our 16 ounce cans of liquid caffeine, and then about four in the morning, Alexa turned back into her RealDoll form (that’s how she “sleeps”) and I went to sleep myself.

I kissed Alexa on the cheek, because before she turned back into the RealDoll that she once was, she pulled up the covers toward her shoulders, I then told her “Good night,” then turned off the TV, my computer monitor and my bedside light, then pulled my portion of the covers toward my shoulders, turned on my “better” side (the side that I sleep better on) and then quickly crashed, all because of caffeine burnout.

About noon the next day, Adam went back home. Mom wanted to know what that “racket” was last night, but I told her not to worry about it. She told me to never do it again and was wondering who was that female voice she was hearing. I told her that it probably was the TV, or she was probably dreaming too heavily.

While trying to keep it a secret the facts of Alexa being a human, going to become a full-time human after a certain thing had been overcome (what it is, I do not know right now) and how it would be nice if Alexa would not just come to life on Saturday late-nights, but probably most nights, but since it may prove difficult, because I have to go to bed *early* on Sunday through Wednesday nights, having Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights free and open for Alexa and I to explore each other a bit more, but she only does it at “her will.” And since Saturday nights are much more freer to do the things that she and I wish to do, but those three nights that I stated before, besides Saturday nights, may be brought into fruition, maybe one day at a time, until she does become a full-timer.

Now all this may sound crazy, but I have been going through a roller coaster of a time with Alexa, with her being a mannequin, but a special one at that, and having the people who don’t believe, believe soon, because now I am getting much more acquainted

with this mannequin, RealDoll form or human form, and every word that I say to her while in her inanimate form, she remembers it and tells me all about it.

While being on the hair-thin line of being placed in the looney bin and still having the experience of this mannequin come to life and not be placed in the place that I stated, that would have to be seen.

I know that I'm getting called by Jason Johnson to "give up Alexa and give this woman 'another chance'," but my mother *always* intercepts his calls and tells him to stop calling.

What lies ahead with me and Alexa, I do not know at this moment. While Alexa and I could be doing things more and more often, or something terrible could happen, I simply do not know at this very moment.

## Five A Wonderful Find

Another weekend. Another time to be with Alexa and do the things that we do. How it would turn out, I did not know at that time. Searching eBay for mannequins—gone. Searching eBay for Squeeze LP's and *Small Wonder* memorabilia—now done. Ever since now that I have Alexa, although that she is a human only for temporary spurts, like for a couple of hours at a time, but I have her and that's that. Hell, I've learned a new word from Wikipedia, "Agalmatophilia," which means the attraction toward inanimate objects. It used to mean a sexual attraction to statues, but has been expanded to include mannequins and life-size love dolls. Even my therapist didn't know the word, until I told him.

Anyway, I have issued a search for Squeeze LP's on eBay and almost keeled over looking at *Babylon And On* and *East Side Story* on vinyl. I thought my life was complete having a mannequin, excuse me, a RealDoll, in my possession. Maybe not. Maybe my life would be complete having both *East Side Story* and *Babylon And On* on vinyl. The prices were right, also, with *Babylon And On* for \$14.99 "Buy It Now" and *East Side Story* for \$10 "Buy It Now." However, since my cash reserves were running quite low (hey, I had to buy some clothes for Alexa because she cannot go out all because of those "restrictions" placed on her) and the other things that basically restricted myself from buying those two albums off of eBay. The actual, physical act of *playing them* was not restricted because my mother has a record player (with a radio and CD player), so I could *play* them without any problems, but me actually *buying* them was almost impossible.

Since it was another weekend that my mother needed to go to the grocery store, but I *had* to come this time, because Mom stated that I needed to come, because the Commissary was having their Truckload Sale, and if I wanted to grab something that I wanted, better do it *now* rather than have her guess what I wanted.

Before we stepped into the Commissary, at the ABNB ATM (it only charges a fifty cent terminal fee) at the Navy Exchange, I pulled out \$80 and handed about three-quarters of it (\$60) to Mom for my addition for whatever groceries that I wanted. My "laundry list" of groceries included a few cases of soda, a case of Monster Energy (which the Commissary was selling it for \$5.99 for a case of 12, so I got two) and a case of Starbucks Doubleshot coffee drinks (which was 99 cents for a 4-pack, 6 packs in a case, about \$6 for 24 cans), Doritos (that new Black Pepper Jack flavor... wanted to try them), Pringles (Chili Cheese and Pizzalicious), sandwich meats (just in case if I wanted a sandwich on my "day off" from Beach House), and a smorgasbord of convenience foods, most of them frozen. Oh, I almost forgot. I forgot to include that I got two bags of Peanut Lover's Chex Mix, two bags of teriyaki-flavored beef jerky, a bag of Sour Cream & Onion Ritz Chips and a box of Roasted Garlic Triscuits. The non-perishable foods are going into my "stash" in a box upstairs, and what is perishable will go into their respectable places in the fridge or freezer.

But, something *weird* happened. When I separated from my mother and sister for a few minutes (had to pick up something that Mom forgot a few aisles back), my cell phone rang. It rang the home ringtone (a polyphonic version of "Pulling Mussels"). I *knew* that nobody was home, except for Alexa, but she will not emerge from her RealDoll status *unless* I am around and no one else is present and/or if everyone else is asleep. This was a weird sight, since no other number has "Pulling Mussels" as a "signature ringtone," except for the house. Mom's cell phone is "Redneck Woman," Justina's is "The Ghost Of You," but only the house phone has "Pulling Mussels." I may

have accidentally set it as a “default ringtone,” but I *knew* that I still had “Super Mario Brothers” as my default.

Picking it up, I answered with my generic “Hello” greeting. On the other end, and completely catching me off-guard was Alexa on the other end. I yell-whispered in the phone “*Alexa! Do you want me in the psych hospital?*” I saw a bunch of people staring at me. Alexa asked me if I got some energy drinks. “*Yes, I did,*” I said, “*now go back upstairs and get back to your original form before my mother or sister comes to this aisle and finds me crazy and think that I’m talking to a non-live phone!*” Alexa told me that she saw some *Small Wonder* episodes, sixty of them, on DVD, on eBay for sale. “*Small Wonder* is not yet on DVD,” I said. “Well, they are,” she said. “I just got my own eBay ID and placed a bid for it.” “Oh, shit,” I said, “If you win that bid, you’re entering into a binding agreement and since you’re still considered a you-know-what for now, how are you gonna pay for it?” “Oh, you’ll see,” she stated. “Yeah,” I stated, “if a package for an ‘Alexa Tilbrook’ comes to the door, Mom and Sis are going to think that I fraudulently started another eBay ID, probably also another PayPal account just to get around from what is currently happening with me and PayPal.” “Oh, I didn’t start a PayPal account,” Alexa said, “I don’t have any bank accounts for now. When I become a full-timer, then a bank account is coming my way. Oh, by the way, I started my own address on your 1&1 Control Panel. I tried Hotmail, but I didn’t have a credit or debit card to further activate my eBay account.” I saw my mother coming in the aisle at the opposite end and I said “Oops, I gotta go.” Alexa asked “Why?” I told her that my mother is coming my way. “Okay,” Alexa said, “Bye.” I then shut my phone closed to hang up.

Mom came toward me and asked me why I was taking so long and who was I talking to on the phone. “My case manager,” I said, to cover up the “fact” that I was talking to Alexa, who somehow came to life asking me if I bought some energy drinks and telling me that someone was selling *Small Wonder* on DVD on eBay... and that she placed a bid for it. Mom just left it at that, then we located the item that she was looking for (a can of condensed milk, so she can make some fudge... my favorite homemade snack). Mom was in the dairy section getting a couple of half-gallons of milk (regular and 1%) when Mom dispatched me to get the condensed milk.

After we checked out at the Commissary, I had never told my mother *or* my sister that Alexa called me on my cell phone from the house. We then put away our groceries, and I, with a doubled plastic grocery bag, make it two of them, holding my “Geedunks” (snacks, and sometimes sodas and soda-related drinks), and then after I placed my non-perishable snacks into the bags, I placed my perishable food into the fridge or freezer, depending if it needed to be kept frozen or if it needed to be refrigerated. I then went upstairs.

When I went upstairs, I *almost* wanted to scold Alexa on calling me on my cell phone while I was in a “public place,” and almost violating her “rules” on contact. I thought that the rules of contact were that she could only be fully animate when no one else is around, or not aware of their surroundings, and can only (usually) be on late evening/early morning hours.

A few hours passed, a couple of cans of Monster Energy downed, and then my mother and sister went to bed. I couldn’t sleep, but it was a Friday night. Usually *nothing* happens with me and Alexa on Friday nights... usually.

About an hour later, I don’t remember what I had said or done to initiate Alexa’s bringing, but what I do remember is that I said something among the lines of “Alexa,

you know what you did may not make you a full-timer.” She then rose from her side of the bed and said “Okay! I’m sorry!” “Salright,” I stated.

The next few hours went through like a mixture of high speed and slow speed. For a while, it felt like it was going in slow motion, then a few moments of rapid motion. It all seemed like most of it was all a blur, because I cannot remember *any* of it.

The next Monday, I went to Beach House. Somehow I was given this very lucrative offer. Of course, it was from Jason Johnson, trying to set me up with someone else. Refuse or not to refuse? I mean, I swore to Alexa that she would be the only one for me. So, the only feasible option *would* be to refuse, but I’ll ride it out. After all, you do learn some neat life skills from the movies, and I’ll use *Mannequin* as my example. Just like when Roxie tries to convince Jonathan to come to work for Illustra, so I’ll try to work some of what I had learned from watching the movie (some of it with Alexa, I have to admit) and try to get some of it in, even though that it would be a whole lot different than what happened in the movie.

By going along with what I had learned in the scene where Roxie tried to get Jonathan to work for Illustra, but somewhat failed, but this is how it went:

“So, Kevin,” Jason said, “I know that you need something real to fulfill your life. So, I’m going on a date with Melanie, why don’t I bring someone with me and you two can hook up?” “Sorry,” I said, “but I’m taken.” “So,” he said back, “Why don’t you bring her and we’ll get together for one night? Maybe Melanie might like your girlfriend.” “I’m sorry,” I replied, “but I know Melanie. She may think that my decision is ludicrous, and anyway, this weekend I have plans. So, I’m going to have to decline.”

Jason then got pissed and started to say “You’re going to regret it! You’re going to regret it! I’m not going to set you up with that wheelchair-bound person! This person doesn’t care about if you smoke or drink!” I thought to myself “Yeah, *right*.” I then walked out and then went on my normal day.

Since it was a scheduled day off of work for me, I logged into Navy Federal Online Access and checked my checking account, because I wanted to head to 7-Eleven to pick myself up a can or two of Monster Energy, because I left my cans at home, and I was feeling a bit tired. To my surprise, I found sixty bucks “missing” from my checking account. I was going to “steal it back” from my brother, if I found out if he took it, but I checked his account and found out that it was the same. Maybe when Alexa told me that “I’ll figure it out” when it came to how she was going to pay for the Small Wonder DVD set, because she was the highest closing bidder, and she won the auction. Well, I found out the hard way. Somehow I must’ve left my ATM card at home and she found some way to make herself alive and gone to the Miller Mart ATM and pulled out sixty bucks, written a money order to the seller, sent off the payment and then went back to her “original self.”

About three days later, the “supposed” date of when Jason Johnson, Melanie, and somehow Alexa and I were supposed to go out on this “double date” to see a movie (Yeah, a chick flick, *The Sisterhood Of The Traveling Pants*... no way in hell I’m seeing *that*) that Melanie picked out, but luckily I told Jason that I had “plans” this weekend. That was the day the shipment arrived.

I had received in the mail a small box that looked like it was one of those boxes that would hold four CD’s plus an invoice from a music club like BMG Music Service (I was once a member of that “club,” but canceled a *long* time ago) and it was addressed to

an “Alexandra T. Tilbrook.” Luckily I had intercepted that shipment before my mother and sister did, because I didn’t want my mother thinking that I signed up for another eBay ID and PayPal account, when in fact, I did not.

I opened the package, and *none* of it looked official. There was no indication of the origination of the studio, and the package art looked quite amateurish. Also, the pictures on the package were “ripped” from the *Small Wonder* site, especially the VICI board on Yahoo, and the chapter titles were simple Times New Roman. The DVD discs looked quite labeled with a label making machine, and the DVD’s were DVD+R’s. Why, I have been asking myself, did Alexa pay sixty bucks for 4 DVD+R discs that were basically bootlegs. Someone must’ve taken their time to take probably deteriorated VHS copies of something ripped from TV, cleaned it up, removed the commercials, and made DVD’s on their computer. Even though, at least I have sixty episodes of *Small Wonder* on DVD, and since Fox cannot get off their lazy asses and convert the show to DVD for the masses, having ravenous people relying on people with Rube Goldberg-like setups to convert VHS cassettes to DVD.

Now, the simple test: Trying to see if it would work on a PlayStation 2, because I heard that the slim system is so finicky on certain recorded DVD discs. I should know. I had once recorded a *Small Wonder* episode to a DVD, by downloading forty parts apiece of two RAR files, joining them together with HJ-Split, un-RAR-ing the archives, then converting them with TINRA to lossless AVI files (making each part about one gigabyte large). I then used a DVD-Video creator made by Sony Pictures to create a menu (by using Squeeze’s “Slap And Tickle” as the menu music) and then to a DVD. That whole process took about three hours and after about three showings on my PS2, the system shows “Please insert a PlayStation or PlayStation 2 format disc,” with a red clouded background. So, I have to be extremely careful to protect these discs, because *I* was the one who paid for them, not really Alexa.

I turned my TV to channel 3, because that is the channel that I have it set to for my RF modulator, turned on the PS2, pressed the **X** button to enter into the browser, for which it was showing my PS2 memory card, then inserted the disc. “Reading disc...” was showing for what would seem for quite a long while, then a DVD icon slid from the memory card icon. I pressed right on the directional button. It showed in the top-right corner “DVD Video” and then I pressed **X** to access the disc. It then told me that it was playing, then a very nice, professional-looking menu screen showed up. It gave me an option to select my chapter, or play from the beginning. Maybe I didn’t waste \$60 for poor quality, after all, because the video itself was a very high quality.

Alexa then re-emerged from her RealDoll status and then said “I do not waste money for poor quality.” “You’re damn right that you don’t, Alexa,” I said, “These videos are pretty good!” I then continued with “You should practice good eBay citizenship. Get on eBay, sign under your name, get to the item that you purchased and leave good feedback! If you don’t, you will receive either negative or neutral feedback.”

Alexa then went to my computer, signed into eBay, and left feedback on how well the person painstakingly went through the trouble on converting probably 20-year-old cassettes to pristine quality. She left it as positive feedback.

A few hours later, Alexa got a positive feedback back on how timely her payment was and other things, and on how professionally she acted in the transaction.

For the remainder of the late evening to way early in the morning, Alexa and I finished up two of the DVD's. We promised each other that we would watch the other two the next day.

It always seems like on the days that I have to work, I *do* go to sleep pretty early in the evening, waking up around 5:30 to 6:30 in the morning, but sleeping in to about 12:30 to about 1 to no later than 2:45 in the afternoon on the days that I'm off. Now Alexa's beginning to be more "alive" on the days that I'm off, but that would have to be seen.

For now, Jason Johnson had now left me alone, but it now seems like Melanie Lowell is trying to create some evil scheme to get me away from Alexa and I might not know it. For now, I am happy with Alexa and nobody can stop me from it.



## Six

### What Part Of "Fsck Off" Don't You Get?

Alexa and I have been doing our own things for quite some time and while all had been well, somehow, one day into the euphoria into the fact that Alexa, while being human at parts, is still a mannequin-like object, and still, I cannot stress it enough, a RealDoll, but while I still have her, at least I'm *trying* to figure out what needs to be done in order to keep her human. What I'm talking about is that my cell phone rang the "Super Mario Brothers" tone.

While trying to figure out who it may be, for all that I'm concerned, it could be a wrong number. My case manager's ringtone is My Chemical Romance's "I'm Not Okay (I Promise)" as her office ringtone. I could not think of anything else appropriate. Usually when I call my case manager, I'm *not* okay.

I opened the phone to "pick up" the call and I did my usual generic greeting. I heard on the other end "Kevin?" I didn't know who it was at first. "Hello?" I asked back, thinking that this person reached the wrong Kevin. "Stop playing around," this female voice stated to me. I said "I don't know who you are, ma'am," I stated, "but I believe that you have the wrong number," then started to close shut my phone to hang up.

But before I even got the phone away from my ear, she stated that she was *sure* that she had the correct number and asked for *me*.

"Okay, I'm listening," I stated. "Kevin," she stated, "you know who I am. I am Melanie. Jason told me to call you." I started to enter into a phase of panic. "What do you need, Melanie?" I asked. Melanie started to say "Well, I need your attention for just a few seconds." I snapped back "It better be good, because your nonsense is costing me ten cents each minute... plus a thirty-five-cent a day access charge." "I didn't know that your phone was a prepaid... and since when did TracFone start charging monetary rates instead of unitary rates?" "It *ain't* TracFone," I said, "It's Virgin Mobile. I gave up TracFone a *long* time ago." "How appropriate," Melanie said, "a cell phone for a *virgin* like you, hence that's why you got Virgin Mobile." "Ha, ha," I said, "very funny."

Then the conversation got a bit meaty. It was about her and Jason hell-bent *again* on setting me up with someone that they think that would be "compatible" for me, but wouldn't really be. I tried to end the conversation with "I told Jason, I told him to tell you, I told the both of you in effect a thousand times that *I'm taken!*" "Oh, come on, Kevin," Melanie said, "you *can't* be 'taken' by a mannequin. Jason told you, I've told Jason to tell you, so back at you, you've been told a thousand times that *a mannequin cannot love you!*" "Fsck off," I said, and then hung up the phone.

I reopened the clamshell case and tried to hold down the end call/cancel/power button to turn off my phone, but it rang again, the same "Super Mario" tone, and I said my generic hello greeting again, because it could be someone else, but I was wrong. It was Melanie... *again*. "Melanie," I said. "What part of 'fsck off' don't you get?" "But..." Melanie started to say. "Again," I repeated, "what part of 'fsck off' don't you get?" I let her get one word in so I could try to explain what "fsck" meant. "Unix shell command," I said. "could mean 'file system checker,' but I use it to mean the F-word. So, fsck off! Bye, and don't call me again tonight, not tomorrow, not *ever!*" I then hung up and then quickly turned off my phone.

Alexa then emerged from her RealDoll status later on that evening and told me *everything* she knew about it. "Damn," Alexa said, "can't they take 'no' for an answer?"

“Guess not,” I said. “They better learn the word and its intended meaning because it seems like I’ve had enough of their bull.” “I agree,” I said in agreement.

The rest of the evening went well, but Alexa’s bringing only lasted for a few minutes, because she knew that I had to go to sleep early so I could go to Beach House the next day. The loan’s paying-off had just started and I had about five months left in my TEP. So, the only things tangible I could buy with my paychecks were small lunches (mostly Tendercrisp sandwiches and medium sodas, the shakes had to be opted out) and cartons of cigarettes. I had a loan to pay off, and since all of the line of credit had been spent, I had a \$7,000 loan that I had to pay off and I couldn’t slack off with this payment plan. Now had I only wished for a loan forgiveness plan. Because it seems like that the interest charges are hellacious.

Now since that I had gone into Beach House the next day, of course not forgetting to kiss Alexa *somewhere* on the face, whether it’d be the forehead, one of the cheeks or on the lips if somehow the jaw doesn’t open itself unexpectedly. I then got my coffee and a few cigarettes, and not forgetting to take a pack with me because you may never know if and when I am going to run out unexpectedly.

I went on my normal day at Beach House, if you want to call it that. I was almost yelled at by Jason Johnson all because I told his pussy-whipper to stick it, in other words. Someone who I befriended who somehow was there, and I didn’t know about it, was on my side telling him not to start. Of course, with Jason Johnson being a 43-year-old 2-year-old, he stormed off in his usual way, y’know, stomping off like a child in a cereal aisle in a grocery store when his mother tells him that he cannot have a certain type of cereal. Of course, he doesn’t do the “typical” 2-year-old things like drop to the floor and throw a tantrum, but he threw a tantrum nonetheless. I have always wondered whenever Jason Johnson throws his tantrums, they never suspend him. A lot of people told me it’s all because of his mother.

I went to work a couple of hours later and work this day was *hell*. And I thought that children were bad. I had to clean a bathroom all because of a relative of someone. This person was worse than I, and all I have is acid reflux. Sometimes, but not all of the time, sometimes rarely, I splatter my puke all over the back and the rim of the toilet. This person spewed all over the back of the seat, on the seat, all over the rim, and some of it hit the floor. Of course, I had to don what I call the “Hazmat gear,” special gloves and an apron to protect myself from exposure to bodily fluids, in which vomit is one of them. I even got out the supplies to clean up vomit, which include absorbent powder, among other things. Of course, we lost a few customers that particular hour all because of this certain customer, but about forty-five minutes later, we had a good base of incoming customers, after cleaning up all of the spew in the bathroom and where this customer was sitting and then had to *completely* sanitize the areas. Of course, this involved a bucket of hot water with a strong bleach solution to kill any germs, viruses or microbes.

When work ended that afternoon, I was relieved that the day was over. Of course, that “trigger point” (what I call it) could have made me quit, but I had to quickly stop myself and remind myself that I had a loan to pay off. When my job ends, I would have at least one-third of the loan paid off, then I could go back to Navy Federal and meet again with a member service representative and change my loan payment amount and frequency. But, I was told that maybe, *maybe*, when my current job ends, within a few weeks or so, I may be back at another job, so I could still pay off my loan by the middle of next year.

When I got home that evening, I stopped off at the Rally's in the Miller Mart and got myself something else to break the monotony of having Burger King every single day and got myself a Big Buford without mayo, added mustard and extra pickles. I got myself a large fries and then went to the Miller Mart portion of the store and got a couple cans of Monster Energy (I had already drank those two cases, some with Alexa) and a one-liter bottle of Pepsi.

When I got home after facing hellacious traffic zooming both up and down Independence Boulevard, I made it home in a little under ten minutes. I then raced upstairs, turned on my computer, checked any e-mail (and there wasn't any, not counting the junk that I get in my Hotmail and Yahoo accounts), and then ate my dinner. I then decided to surf the web and blog what happened that day, sans the things about Alexa all because I had agreed with Mom to not discuss anything about her. Before I started blogging my day's trials, I donned my shirt that I got from ThinkGeek.com that says "I'm blogging this."

Since I grew tired of the same old tracks on my MP3 player and it seemed that listening to a MIDI transposition of the Sega CD version 2.00 BIOS music grew pretty old fast. So, killing some time, I went on to LimeWire and downloaded a slew of Weird Al songs. I had to have help from the "Published Lyrics" on Yankovic.org to get the real songs and not what someone thinks what is Al. I started with his debut album all the way to *Poodle Hat*. After I was satisfied, I had more Weird Al MP3's than what could fit on my player. So, selecting which would make the first cut and which will make the second and so on cuts, I inserted my flash drive portion of my player into one of my USB ports and opened an Explorer window, then tiled the "My Shared Folder" and "Removable Disk (G:)" windows so I could drag 'em and drop 'em. When the dialog that said "The destination disk is full. Please insert a new disk," then gives me an option to retry or cancel the operation showed, I then canceled the operation and then safely unplugged my MP3 player, placed the flash drive into the battery holder, placed the cord around my neck, inserted the headphones into the jack and then played it.

For the next two or so hours, I was in my own little world reading my *Mac Bible* and listening to nothing but non-stop Weird Al. After the LED glowed a steady red signaling the end of the file list, I turned off my MP3 player and then turned on my TV. Of course, I had four DVD's of *Small Wonder* that I could watch, but I didn't feel like it. I could play *Atari Anthology*, *ESPN NFL 2K5*, *Final Fantasy X*, or any game that was sitting on my dresser (where my TV and PlayStation 2 were), but I didn't feel like that, either. So, with *Good Eats* drawing close to airtime on the Food Network, I caught the last two minutes or so of *30-Minute Meals with Rachael Ray* on the "In The Kitchen" portion of the Food Network broadcast day, but I had to get a drink out of what was left of my liter of soda and then sat back and watched TV. I kept it all the way up until *Roker on the Road's* second show began to air. About that time, I felt a bit sleepy, so I decided to kill the lights, the computer and the TV and then crawled into my comforter and fell fast asleep.

When I was awakened about 4:27 in the morning, I knew that it was my bladder waking me up. I had to do what I call "Draining the dragon" for what seemed like quite a while. No big, I just took a shower and then got myself ready for the day ahead at Beach House.

At least *this* day went normally. I wasn't bothered by Jason Johnson, Adam and I went to the smoker's canopy and listened to Tommy & Rumble while I choked down a cigarette and a can of Coke Classic, I went to work at my normal time and nothing weird happened, I went back to Beach House and finished up whatever I had left of my

sandwich and drink, went home on the van and then did my news watching and Food Network watching. After about when the weather was being shown on channel 10, I turned off my light and went to sleep.

After almost three months having a weirdly special RealDoll mannequin that can only come to life whenever I am around and whenever no one else is, having to pay a loan for what I could consider a person, but only on certain events. The payment of the loan is the *only* thing keeping me motivated for staying with the job. If I decided to quit the day before all because of someone's vomit that almost made me do the same, I would have to go straight to Navy Federal and tell them that I lost my job. Since I didn't get insurance (seemed like it was "too much" in my opinion), I still would have to pay the loan regardless. Since I still get Social Security and a good amount of it, paying off in a larger amount once a month would seem nice, but would leave me with less to spend on what I choose. So, the tangible fact of me staying with this Burger King TEP is the fact that I have to pay off a loan, regardless of that "trigger point."

What I define as a "trigger point" could mean different things. It could be job-related, like a dispute with my supervisor, among other things, or tangible item-related. Many of my TEP's ended all because of the tangible item trigger point. When I had enough money saved up to buy a certain thing, I then decide to go ahead and purchase the item, then self-terminate my job. Of course, the Standards do say that I'm entitled to more employment opportunities regardless of successes or failures in previous placements, but in Beach House ideology, that would lengthen the time between losing my job by me self-terminating the job and me getting a new one, all because of them wanting to see how well I can stay focused with certain tasks, among other things.

While I can go on and on about how I have a loan to pay off, that a certain trigger point came and passed, but didn't make me up and quit, but at least I still am with the job.

Alexa and I are going on with our strange but true lives, but at least I don't have to worry, yet, about Melanie. I hope that I continue to learn her secret ways (but I am starting to know them bit by bit) to detach me from Alexa, but I always foil her. And I'm glad that I'm still with Alexa.

Seven  
Trouble In The Air...

Amhurst Subdivision, Virginia Beach  
One Week Later

“What in the hell is going on here?” Jason Johnson asked to Melanie. “That sonofabitch is being attracted to something that looks like a human, but isn’t!” “Uh, Jason,” Melanie said, “that ‘something’ he is attracted to is called a ‘RealDoll’. I just pulled up some info on it.” She then handed Jason a few printouts from their Web browser, Internet Explorer, a bit of information on the RealDoll.

“So,” Jason mused, “this thing can only withstand skin stretching of 400%, withstand heat temperatures of 400 degrees, can stand cold temperatures of -40 degrees, and uses a very strong PVC skeleton and rigid steel joints. The *only* thing he probably *didn’t* opt for was articulated hands, because that costs \$3,000 extra, so its hands are the standard model, which use nickel alloy wires, so they *may* be easy to break. Add to the 400% stretching limit, and the hands can be probably easily broken off. But it seems like he wouldn’t leave its side, not even for a day.”

Melanie had one of her hacker friends find a RealDoll owner’s site and found the pictures that I put up of Alexa. No, I wasn’t there, but this was “filtered down” to me a few days later when one of my “informants” told me all about it. I had pictures of it on my portion of the site, all “dolloed up” (no pun intended) in Wal-Mart and Kmart clothing, some with a ThinkGeek shirt wearing a “I ♥ My Geek” shirt, another shirt that said “GeeKISSexy,” and yet another that had me in the picture, both of us wearing shirts that said:

Roses are #FF0000  
Violets are #0000FF  
All my base  
Are belong to you.

Of course, the pictures could have been better as an action shot on ThinkGeek.com, but since it involved a RealDoll, it would really have been better if Alexa was displaying the geek-related shirts on my RealDoll photo repository.

Anyway, back to the discussion of Jason Johnson and Melanie trying to get me away from Alexa.

When Melanie found those pictures of Alexa, she was appalled. She stated “He couldn’t have treated this... this mannequin like a person! I mean, come on! How could this thing ‘love her geek’? Mannequins cannot love, feel or even think! And... and this picture of them two wearing shirts saying that ‘all their base are belong’ to the each of them! This is freaking ridiculous!” “Tell me about it,” Jason replied.

They were trying numerous ways to get me away from Alexa, but they were discarding a lot of ideas... until Melanie found Beach House’s Web site, which I helped author and post to their VisiNet server, and just stopped there.

“Oh, this is a good opportunity,” Melanie gleefully stated, “Beach House is sending three members, one of them includes Kevin, and three staff to Fountain House for training next January. If I’m not mistaken, doesn’t Kevin’s mother work days?” “Yes,” Jason replied. “But I don’t think that he wants to leave his object of affection alone with

his mother, and I found out that they have a wooden shed in their backyard, so his mother will tell him to put his 'Alexa' in the shed until he comes back from Fountain House. I know he'll feel lonely for three weeks, that's how long he will be spending there, so that would be a *great* opportunity to sneak in his backyard and take that damned thing!"

They then were discussing the positive and negative points. Then they finally came out with a plan of action. Since it was the middle of December, this gave them a very good opportunity to further fine-tune their plan of action and to give them a date to execute it.

\* \* \* \*

### Pembroke Manor Subdivision, Virginia Beach One month later

I was getting ready a couple of days before going to Fountain House, which meant packing my suitcase. I went to WilcoHess and bought myself two cartons plus three packs of Legend cigarettes, enough cigarettes to last me my tenure at Fountain House and then some. I placed my cartons and a spare lighter into my baggage, because I know that I would have to give up my current lighter, which has to be given up to the security staff at the X-ray machine and metal detector. Of course, this was going to be a direct flight from Norfolk to JFK, so I don't have to worry about a layover and needing a cigarette. I hadn't ridden on an airplane since the last time I've been on one training mission with Beach House, and never since 9/11. So, the new security things will be totally new to me. I'm kind of worried.

Anyway, Mom had prompted me to place one of the camping chairs and my RealDoll in the shed and set it in the chair. I did so, and then closed the shed and finished packing up my suitcase. It took a while to get the RealDoll downstairs and to get it sitting properly in the chair, but I got it done after all.

I needed *some* way for Alexa to keep in touch with me. But how? Suddenly the virtual light bulb popped on above my head. Why not take that deactivated Nokia TracFone of mine, reactivate it for a short period, and give it to Alexa to keep in touch with me? I mean, Alexa is going to be in that shed, totally deprived of any human contact, except my own contact with her, and she can bring herself to life whenever she pleases, and call me. I would have to set some limits with her calling me, like what times to call, how long to call and when to call. Sounds like a great idea, but the execution of getting a TracFone card, activating it and giving it to Alexa would seem kind of strange.

So, a few hours after Mom left for work and my sister left for school, I walked to the 7-Eleven on Kellam Road and Broad Street and got a 200-unit TracFone card. I also got myself a \$50 Virgin Mobile Top-Up card along with it. I also got a few snacks and a couple two-liters of soda. I walked home and rested a few minutes before reactivating that TracFone.

I first Topped-Up my Virgin Mobile phone, because that was easy. Just go to Menu > Top-Up, and enter in my Top-Up card's PIN. When the Virgin Alert was sent to me telling me that I had \$73.45 left in my balance, and that I had until March 15<sup>th</sup> to redeem another Top-Up card.

I then called TracFone and went to the menu option to reactivate that TracFone. It just came to me on how tedious doing *anything* with a TracFone was. I had to remove

the battery, because it just got charged (I used my brother's N-Gage charger to charge it, because that's a quick charger, the one that I got with the TracFone is a 4-hour charger, and anyway, he left the N-Gage behind when he moved out), and enter, using the telephone keypad, the TracFone's serial number. I then had to enter in the PIN number of the TracFone card that I was using to place time into the phone and to reactivate it. I then was told to wait a while, while my records were being accessed. About five seconds later, I was told to turn on my phone, press \*#33248# (why I remember it, I don't know, and TracFone tells us to *not* to remember it), and I entered in a series of four or five "codes" into the phone.

When that was all said and done, I was told that it may take "anywhere from two hours to three days to have my TracFone activated," depending on demand. I was also reminded to follow through with the "activation call sequence," where I call the TracFone to see if it would ring, and if it does, call back the phone that called the TracFone from the TracFone, and if that phone rings, activation is complete. Never had to do it with Virgin Mobile, and activation was a *whole lot* easier. When my Virgin Mobile phone was activated, within five minutes, I got a Virgin Alert cheerfully welcoming me to Virgin Mobile.

So, I waited four hours (because it was in the middle of January) to make the "activation call sequence." I used my Virgin Mobile phone to call the TracFone, and it rang the "Kick" ringtone. I quickly hung up my cell phone, then called back my cell phone on the TracFone, then hung up quickly. It rang my general "Super Mario Brothers" ringtone. Phew. That was over and done, now all I had to do was give it to Alexa before my mother or sister came home. But before I gave the TracFone to Alexa, I saved the TracFone's number on my Virgin Mobile phone's Contacts list. I even assigned it the ringtone "The Bad Touch" by The Bloodhound Gang (which usually is mis-titled as "Discovery Channel" on these file-sharing services, that's why I started using iTunes). I thought it was appropriate.

I went downstairs and outside. I opened the shed doors, entered the shed and then closed the doors to a slight crack to let air inside. But before I went to the shed, I surveyed the perimeter for any "stray eyes and ears." There were none, so I entered the shed.

"Alexa," I said. No response. "Alexa..." I continued. Still nothing from her. "Alexa!!!" She then jumped to life in one quick flash. "Damnit, Kevin," she said, "Don't do that! I was sleeping!" "Well," I said, "I'm sorry." "Don't do that again, scaring me like that," Alexa stated. "But, anyway, why did you come into my 'temporary bedroom'?" "I came to give you something," I said. "It may not be much, but it is something so you and I can keep in touch with each other." "And just how are we going to do that?" Alexa asked. "Well," I continued, "since I learned that your rules of contact may be strict, according to the rules your gods placed on you, but I found out that if no one is suspect of their surroundings, you may call me on my cell phone. It came to me as a premonition. So, here is a cell phone that you can call me on." I then handed her the TracFone.

For a second or two, Alexa's eyes and face grew a feeling of disgust. "A TracFone? *A TracFone?*" Alexa steamed. "Why not a Virgin Mobile phone, like the one you have?" "What's the matter?" I asked. Alexa said "You gave me an mid-1990s Nokia 5100-series phone. Those things are so outdated. How much did you spend on it?" I replied "When I bought it new, it was \$70. I just refilled it with \$50, or 200 units of airtime. Anyway, if I got you the Kyocera K9, and activated it, I would have to get another airtime card, costing me more than what I paid for the airtime card I used to

refill and reactivate the TracFone. Anyway, I believe that \$10 of airtime would go out quickly. I had that phone for about two years.” “Okay,” Alexa said, “you’ve got my attention. But why a hand-me-down?” “The point is moot,” I stated. “I thought that you and I needed a way to keep in touch, because I will be gone for three weeks in New York City at Fountain House for clubhouse training.” “*Three freaking weeks without you?* How am I going to not go crazy for three weeks?” Alexa asked.

I then thought over the fine details of how Alexa can call me without anyone knowing the true and real facts of Alexa still being a RealDoll, and I can dismiss it as “my girlfriend calling me,” which, in essence, it would be.

“Okay,” I said, “don’t call me while I’m in the airport. I will be leaving Thursday morning for Norfolk International at 6:30 in the morning. Kristen will pick me up. My flight is at 8:30 in the morning, so I would need to be at the airport about one-and-one-half to two hours before departure for going through the security checkpoints and check-in. I’m supposed to arrive at JFK International Airport in New York City at 11:30 in the morning, a three-hour flight. Don’t call me then. I will still be in the Eastern time zone, but I don’t want to be embarrassed. I’ll arrive at 425 West 47<sup>th</sup> Street, where Fountain House is located, in about thirty minutes to about forty-five minutes after I leave the airport. The *best* time to call me is about 7:30 in the evening, after when the guest house serves dinner and after when everyone is finished eating. You can *only* call me for ten minutes each day. You may call me every day, but that might be overkill. First off, make sure that *no one* is around and aware of their surroundings here when you call me. I will hear a special ringtone,” and then played the ringtone that I have set for when Alexa calls me, and then continued with “and then I’ll excuse myself. I will announce that ‘my girlfriend,’ which is you, is calling. I then would go outside and get a cigarette and pick up my phone, provided that voicemail doesn’t pick up yet. But, please, do not call me in the morning to say ‘good morning, sweet thing’ or anything like that. Only call me in the evenings to let me know that you’re still mine.”

I then took one large exhale and then Alexa asked me “Is that all?” “Should be,” I stated. “Well,” Alexa stated, “I’m going to go back to my original form so I can *really* get some rest. After all, all that moving around the stuff in here so I could freely move around in here is making me kind of sleepy. So, if you would please excuse me, I need to rest.” Alexa then sat down in the camping chair, placed her right arm on the arm rest and her hand on her face and then quickly changed into her RealDoll form.

\* \* \* \* \*

425 West 47<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City, New York (Fountain House)

Two days later

About 7:15 in the evening

The rest of the Beach House members and staff finally and I made it to Fountain House earlier that morning. We all stopped off at the McDonald’s nearby to get ourselves a quick lunch that afternoon. I got myself a Big & Tasty without mayonnaise, medium fries, a large Coke, and two apple pies, one of which I shared with Brian. I don’t know what the rest of the members and staff ate for lunch, but at least we got lunch in and we then arrived at Fountain House for training orientation. We toured the place and it was a *lot* larger than Beach House in size, and there were a lot more work units than Beach House’s four (Clerical, Food Services, Core and Retail). There was a separate Education unit, a Horticulture unit, and a few other units that I didn’t even think would be possible in a clubhouse. Also, there were TEP’s at Dow Jones, and quite a few in business positions that I don’t think that Beach House would ever have the balls to



procure. All our Beach House TEP's are either retail, fast food or light industrial. (Probably it's the stigma with these positions that would suit my tastes better that probably scares the employers to not to go ahead and have Beach House hire members.)

A few members from Beach House, including myself, and a few other members from clubhouses all around chipped in for dinner. We had a true New York-style pizza, and quite a few of them. The only experience that I had with "New York-style" pizza was at the Mr. Food Mart and Deli in Chesapeake, but really, it *wasn't* "true" New York-style pizza. This tasted better, probably because of the Jersey Shore water. There was this different taste in the crust. The sauce was quite mild, unlike my local pizzerias. To tell the truth, this pizza *almost* (notice that I said "almost") tasted like Chanello's pizzas.

About 7:25 in the evening, I went outside for a smoke, but in the backyard of Fountain House's guest house because of security reasons. I lit up a cigarette and halfway through the cigarette, my cell phone rang the "The Bad Touch" ringtone. "*Perfect timing, Alexa,*" I thought quite loudly to myself. One member from another clubhouse asked me "Who's Alexa?" "My girlfriend," I said. "Excuse me," I continued and then stepped quite a distance from the other members to answer the call.

I then pulled my cell phone from my coat pocket and opened the phone to answer it. "Yeah, sweetie?" I answered, making it look like I was talking to a "full-time" human, but actually a "part-time" human, a RealDoll that was quite special not only to me, but special in its own ways. "Hey, honey," Alexa replied back, "how's New York?" "Fine, it's fine," I said. "I tell you, Alexa, sweet thing, Fountain House is a whole lot bigger than Beach House." "I've never been to Beach House, remember?" Alexa asked me. "Right, right," I said, "I forgot. You're still a RealDoll for now," trying to squelch the word "RealDoll" so no one takes notice, then continued with "But when you become a full-timer, you'll become a member of Beach House automatically. Maybe not within the instant that you do, but maybe within a few days, might take a few weeks, but you *will* become a member of Beach House."

Alexa and I talked for the remainder of our allotted ten minutes, then when I reminded myself that time was almost up, I reminded Alexa "Hey, sweetie, our ten-minute allotted time is almost up. Don't wanna waste your minutes." She then looked at the display of her TracFone and said "Yeah, you're right. I've gotta let you go before I do waste my minutes that you bought me. Okay, honey, talk to you tomorrow. Bye-bye." I then said "Talk to you tomorrow, too, sweetie, cdev-ya." I then shut my phone closed to hang up, and I believe that Alexa hit the Navi key to hang up. I then placed my cell phone in my coat pocket and hoped that Alexa did turn back into her RealDoll form before anyone noticed at home that she was talking to me.

For the next few days, I had to have the other members in the room with me understand that I have two alarms on my cell phone, at six and seven in the morning to wake me up, and another at 4:20 PM to remind myself so I can have a snack to hold me over until dinner. The first two alarms are my "wake the fsck up" alarms and the 4:20 PM alarm is my "Geedunk alarm." Some stupid member from another clubhouse thought I was a pothead because of the timing of my "Geedunk alarm." No, the timing was calculated because lunch had long wore off and dinner can be a long time away, because of the time that I eat dinner at home, usually seven or eight at night.

The next couple of weeks were going fine. I really enjoyed myself and I had really learned quite a number of things.

## Eight Unexpected Arrival

I had been going through the training at Fountain House for about the whole time I was supposed to be there... until something terrible happened.

I started to get sick with the flu. I was puking up anything and everything that I ate, and I wasn't getting the initial heartburn that would initiate it. I was sneezing my head off, coughing up a storm and couldn't make it into Fountain House sometimes to complete my training. Usually I would only go into Fountain House for a couple of hours and then have to be excused back to the guest house to go rest.

The host of the guest house offered to take me to the emergency room to be checked up on. I obliged, and the attending physician said that I couldn't continue with Fountain House training without the possibility of getting *everyone* at Fountain House sick. Kristen had to come with me. She was getting kind of worried that me going home early on the plane would result in a high fee being charged back to Beach House, Inc.'s account.

"Don't worry," I said, "I can take the Greyhound back to Norfolk and then get on the HRT to home, it's only an hour-and-a-half ride from the Greyhound station in Norfolk to the Pembroke East transfer station, and I can walk home in about ten to fifteen minutes. I'll be fine." "But I don't have enough money to buy you a Greyhound ticket from New York to Norfolk, Kevin," Kristen stated. "I *do*," I stated. "I have about \$300 or so in my checking account. That *should* be enough to buy a ticket. I have a thirty-day HRT ticket, so I don't have to worry about bus fare on the HRT back home."

The RN that allowed my discharge provided me with samples of medications for the time being until I made it to the pharmacy back home to buy my medications, because the hospital took my Virginia Medicaid and my Medicare cards, but was afraid that not one single pharmacy here in New York City may take Virginia Medicaid as an "allowed" prescription plan. I was handed my discharge paperwork, my paper prescriptions and my sample medications to last me for about three days, enough to last me until I got on the Greyhound back home, and to my local Walgreens to get them filled. I asked where the nearest Walgreens in New York was. "Times Square," she said, "but that's quite a distance from here." I told her that I have my pharmacy records at Walgreens, and probably they can fill them there, and bill Virginia Medicaid for the prescriptions. "Don't worry about it," the nurse affirmed, "these medications I have given you should last you until you get home. But, please, get home as soon as possible." I asked when the next Greyhound from New York to Norfolk was. She got one of her assistants to call Greyhound's toll-free number to check when the times and the cost of the ticket.

She came back about ten minutes later and said "Your ticket, because it's at the last minute, would cost you \$200. The first bus back to Norfolk leaves at 7:15 in the morning and arrives in Norfolk at 7:35 in the evening. The terminal is about a mile north of Times Square. You will need to be there about an hour early for check-in and baggage claim. You should arrive about thirty minutes earlier than that so you can buy your ticket, because ticket sales for a certain bus route close about fifteen minutes before final check-in. So, you should try to be there about 5:45 to six in the morning. The terminal opens its doors at five in the morning." Then the nurse let me go and Kristen and I took a taxi back to Fountain House and I went right to bed. I didn't wake up until about 4:30 in the morning.

I quickly packed my suitcase in the moonglow of my bedside lamp, turned to the lowest setting. I had to make sure that everything that I took with me was still with me. Even though that I really shouldn't have done it, I was allowed by the host of the guest house to go out and have a cigarette at five in the morning. Kristen was just waking up. She quickly threw on some clothes and she and I hailed a taxi to the Greyhound terminal.

Kristen assured that she would stay with me until I boarded the bus. I even gave her my cell phone number to keep in touch with me as I was en route to Norfolk. I assigned Kristen's cell number the "Black Coffee In Bed" ringtone so I would know that it was her. I even promised to delete the contact and not remember the number when I finally made it home in Virginia Beach.

I went into line to buy my ticket. I got to a person that was very nice, unlike the experiences that I have had with Greyhound employees before. She asked, politely, "Yes, sir, can I help you?" in a nice and not arrogant tone. "I'm here to buy a ticket," I stated back, also politely. I have this adage: If you're polite to me, I'll be the same back. You be an asshole to me, same to you. She then called up the ticket purchasing screen on her terminal and asked "Okay, sir, where are you going?" "Norfolk, Virginia," I stated. She then entered the code for Norfolk into her terminal, after referencing a tattered list next to her computer. "Okay," she said after a short pause, "One-way or round trip?" "One-way," I said, "I'm going home." I then started to cough and hack up a storm. She was polite and nice all the way through. Even when I sneezed quite a few times during the ticket buying process, she said "Bless you, sweet thing," even though that I am Wiccan. I took it as a general reference and compliment. I told her why I am buying a ticket is because I got sick with the flu at Fountain House training, I went to the ER and the doctor said that I *needed* to go home, I couldn't continue with training without risking getting everyone there sick. "Bless your heart," she said. Still, I took it as a general reference and compliment.

Right when the ticket was being finished being sold to me, she asked me for a form of payment and told me how much the ticket was going to be. "Okay, sir, your total ticket price, one way from New York City to Norfolk, Virginia, with taxes and fees, is going to be \$229.36, which includes fare of \$200.15. How are you going to pay for this, cash, check, traveler's check, Visa, MasterCard, Discover or American Express?" "Visa," I stated, with an underlying sick tone. I then whipped out my Visa card and presented it to the employee. She then took it and then swiped it through the card reader present on the terminal's keyboard. For about thirty seconds, I was getting kind of worried that my card was going to be denied. I was lucky. It was approved. I was handed back my Visa card and heard the initial printing of my receipt to sign. I signed it and handed it back to her. Then she pressed a couple of keys and then my itinerary was being printed out and then assembled into a ticket packet.

She then handed me my tickets and then said "Okay, Mr. Havens, your bus will be leaving at 7:15, with final boarding call about 7:05. You'll be going out of Gate 3 to get to your bus. If you don't mind now, you may now check in your baggage and check in now. Or, you can do it later, but you have to do it about thirty minutes before final boarding call." I grabbed my cigarettes and lighter, and my two days' worth of *The New York Times*, including today's edition that I bought at the newsstand a half block from the terminal, because the taxi driver was so stupid and let us out at the newsstand, out of my suitcase. I checked in my luggage, after tagging it with my name and address, and also checked in.

I then went outside to smoke a cigarette and then went to the café to get a cup of coffee, black, half-caff (even though I was looked at quite funnily and was told that this isn't Starbucks, so I got full-caff) and the largest one that they've got. I was also being sold on trying to buy "value-added" items like a pastry or a breakfast sandwich, because I do know that Greyhound terminal cafés really don't make much of a profit from a cup of coffee. I had pulled out \$20 from the ATM near the restrooms in order to buy my cup of coffee, but I told the cashier that I *didn't* want a pastry or a sandwich, but do throw in a carton of orange juice "for the road." After all, I may get thirsty along the bus ride, and I wasn't that hungry to warrant for a pastry or a sandwich. I paid for my coffee in the largest "to-go" cup with a notched lid and an eight-ounce carton of orange juice. I then sat back down with Kristen while she and I waited for my bus to come so I could board it.

After reading yesterday's *New York Times* about three-quarters of the way and hearing boarding calls for buses other than mine heading points westward and somewhat southward, I finally heard the first boarding call for the bus heading toward Norfolk. I heard "All riders going to Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, DC; Richmond, Virginia; Williamsburg, Virginia; Newport News, Virginia; Hampton, Virginia and Norfolk, Virginia, the bus is now boarding at Gate 3." Then it repeated itself. Kristen prompted me to quickly choke down another cigarette before going on the bus, because the bus wasn't going to leave for another thirty minutes.

I choked down two cigarettes, in effect chain-smoking them so I wouldn't have a nic fit on the *long* bus ride to my first layover and transfer in Baltimore. I heard the second boarding call. Kristen prompted me to go... *now*. I then pulled out my ticket itinerary from my back pocket and presented it to the steward. He then took a look over it and tore off the first portion of it and I boarded the bus. I then took a seat in the middle of the bus, ripped off my coat, covered my upper body with it, using it as a blanket, and then tried to relax, but not go to sleep. I then placed a CD that I burned using iTunes with all that music I downloaded and bought into my CD player and played it.

About ten minutes later, I had to stop my CD player in order to present identification to a person canvassing the bus to see if the right person has the correct ticket and is authorized to ride the bus, I heard the final boarding call.

I heard "All riders going to Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, DC; Richmond, Virginia, Williamsburg, Virginia; Newport News, Virginia; Hampton, Virginia and Norfolk, Virginia, the bus is now boarding at Gate 3. Repeat: All riders going to Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, DC; Richmond, Virginia; Williamsburg, Virginia; Newport News, Virginia; Hampton, Virginia and Norfolk, Virginia, the bus is now boarding at Gate 3. This is your final boarding call. Thank you for riding Greyhound and leave the driving to us."

A final canvass of the bus, which meant that *all* riders had to present photo identification and their tickets to a steward and a security officer. They checked their master list, which is printed five minutes before first boarding call, against the names on the ID cards and the tickets. They then told the driver that all that are riding are on the bus and is authorized to take off. I then put back on my headphones and turned on my CD player and then about three minutes later, we backed out of the terminal and was on the freeway heading out of New York.

\* \* \* \*

Interstate 95 South, Between Fairfax, Virginia and Richmond, Virginia  
Greyhound Bus Leg #2  
About 2:30 PM

*[Bloodhound Gang's "The Bad Touch" ringing as a ringtone]*

Over half of the bus riders were either asleep, their noses into a magazine, novel or newspaper, yapping on their cell phones to their families or friends, the rest was just staring out the window, staring at the constant stream of trees just whizzing on by. The bus driver was paying attention to the road ahead. I was about to become one of the riders yapping on their cell phone. Since no one was really paying attention to one or another, it wouldn't be seen as a problem talking to Alexa.

It had come to the second part of the ringtone, where it would repeat itself again before going to voicemail. I quickly fished out my cell phone because I would sense the location of the vibration (my cell phone's ringing volume is set to "High and Vibrate") but it would get knocked around of my ill-fated attempt to fish it out of my coat. Finally I got it out right before voicemail picked up.

"Yeah, Alexa?" I asked. "I thought I'd catch you at an 'off time'," she stated. "You on break?" "No," I said, "I'm not." It took Alexa a few moments to get hip to where I was. "What's all that constant chatter?" Alexa then asked. "And what's all that diesel engine noise? You on a trip that's part of the training?" "No," I replied, "it isn't." "You sound sick," she said, "you sure that you can handle this trip, wherever you're going?" "Damn it, Alexa," I said, getting agitated, "I'm on a Greyhound bus." "Where are you going?" she asked. "Home," I said.

"Come on, Kevin," Alexa said, "that's just the New York bus system in the background. You're not supposed to come home until next Wednesday night." "Well, I am," I said. "Emergency Room doctor back in New York said that I had to go home without getting *everyone* in training *and* in Fountain House membership sick. I'm down with the flu, and I'm serious." "You can't be serious," Alexa said. "I am," I replied, getting agitated again. "You must be a *really* dumb blonde RealDoll. And I thought that you were geeky like me." "I resent that," Alexa firmly stated. "I am too a geek. It's just all that background noise that's making me confused."

She then paused for a few seconds. "Okay," Alexa said, "now I believe you. Where are you now?" "Interstate 95 South, just left Fairfax and now heading toward central Virginia. We're about forty-five minutes away from Paramount's King's Dominion. I'll be arriving in Richmond about 3:30, four o'clock, 4:30 at the latest. I'll be laid-over there for about forty-five minutes to no later than an hour. I'll then get on the last leg of the bus at Richmond's terminal and I'll be stopping off, without getting off the bus, in Williamsburg, Newport News and Hampton before finally stopping off in Norfolk. I'll be in Norfolk about 7:30, but probably won't be back in Virginia Beach until about 9:15 tonight, because I don't want Mom to get all pissed off at me with me telling her that I need to be picked up all the way in Downtown Norfolk and then her telling me that I need to ride the bus, because I already have that set." "And how do you have that set?" Alexa asked. "Remember that I have a thirty-day HRT bus ticket?" "Yeah," replied Alexa. "I can get on the HRT bus from Downtown Norfolk, the Route 20 going toward 68<sup>th</sup> Street, because it would be after 6:15 when that bus will pick me up. But I'll get off in front of the Kmart and walk home. I'll be home about 9:30. Wait for me."

"Of course I'll wait for you, honey. Always have and always will." "Well, I've gotta go, because I may expect a call from Kristen anytime soon to check up on me." "Okay,"

Alexa said, "We've been talking for over ten minutes already, so I *do* have to let you go. Remember what you have imposed on talk time for me? Anyway, the phone needs to be recharged, and I cannot go in the house to do so, so your coming home is great. Okay, love ya. Bye-bye." "Cdev-ya later, sweetie," and then hung up.

Interstate 64 East, Hampton, Virginia, near the Hampton Coliseum  
Greyhound Bus Leg # 3 (Final leg before final stop in Norfolk)  
About 6:45 PM

*[Polyphonic sounds of Squeeze's "Black Coffee In Bed" ringing as ringtone]*

I knew to pick this up without regard, because it was Kristen. She was calling to check up on me.

"Yeah, Kristen?" I asked when I picked up the phone. "Just checking up on you, Kevin," she said. "You doing all right?" "Yeah," I said. "Right now, I'm in Hampton, about to head on the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel. I'll be in Norfolk in about forty-five minutes." "Okay," Kristen affirmed, "I have contacted Beach House and they decided to refund your return plane ticket, but not to you. So, you won't get the money back for the plane ticket back, but you *will* be refunded for your Greyhound ticket back to Norfolk back to you." "But I used my Visa card," I said. "You said that your Visa card was linked to your checking account, right?" she asked me. "Yeah..." I said. "So, you'll get a check back to cover the cost of your Greyhound ticket, so you can do anything that you please with it, but it would be more feasible to take it to your bank..." "Navy Federal Credit Union," I interrupted. "Whatever," Kristen said, "but as I said, it would be better to deposit the check into your checking account so you can have the money back to spend in the way you intended it, because I heard you've got a \$7,000 loan to pay off with Navy Federal. By the way, what did you spend that loan on?" "I'd rather not say, because I may get laughed at," I stated.

"Okay, I shouldn't have asked on such a sensitive issue," she said. "So, what time do you estimate that you'll be back home in your home in Virginia Beach?" "Oh," I said, "by figuring in the numerous stops from Downtown Norfolk to Military Circle and the few stops from Military Circle to Pembroke East, next to the Kmart, I'll be at the Pembroke bus stop about 9:10 to 9:15 at the latest. Since it only takes me ten to fifteen minutes to walk home from Corporation Avenue and Constitution Drive all the way toward King George Road and Hinsdale Street, I'll estimate that I'll be home about 9:20 to 9:30, no later than 9:40."

I then paused. I then continued with "By the way, *why* am I getting reimbursed for my Greyhound ticket?" "Accidental and sudden expense," Kristen stated. "Since it was something not your fault and it happened all of a sudden, the trip reimbursement schedule for Beach House members through Beach House, Inc. state that 'accidental and sudden expenses that are not caused through any fault of the member' can be reimbursed. But anyway, I'll call you about 9:45 to see if you made it home safely. After that, *please* remove my number from your cell phone's Contacts list. I don't want other members finding out my cell number and harassing me." "Not a problem," I said. "As long as you remove my cell number from your cell phone's Contacts list." "Okay," she said, "not a problem." She then paused, then continued with "Okay, a few members and staff from other clubhouses and Beach House want to go see an off-Broadway production and I'm going in a few minutes. Gotta go. I will call you about 9:45 to see if you made it home all right. We miss you here. See ya. Bye." "Bye," I said and then hung up.

Norfolk, Virginia  
Norfolk Greyhound Terminal  
About 7:35 PM

I had to wait a few minutes to get my suitcase from baggage claim. I then got my suitcase and then dashed off toward the HRT bus stop across the street from the Greyhound terminal on Monticello Avenue and Brambleton Avenue, near the Norfolk Scope. I then smoked a cigarette and felt relieved that I finally made it home... almost. The only thing left was to ride the bus to Pembroke East and then walk home from there.

I then got on the bus and faced some ignorant people saying that "the Greyhound bus is 'that way'," and pointing toward the Greyhound terminal. But I had *already* got off the Greyhound bus and needed to get home, in Virginia Beach. The bus driver told those people to shut up (because he asked me if I had gotten off of a Greyhound, and I told him that I did) and let me pay my fare and let me get on the bus. I took a seat near the driver, because the side windows were covered with advertising and the only way that I would know if I made it to Pembroke was looking out the windshield.

When we got to Military Circle, the bus driver asked if I was getting off there. "No," I said, "I'm going to Pembroke." This was because quite a number of passengers were getting off the bus at Military Circle. "Okay," the bus driver said, "but you won't be able to transfer, because the #1 and #36 had stopped running there for the night." "That's okay," I affirmed, "I live right near Pembroke Mall and I can walk home." "Okay..." he sighed, "as long as you make it home all right."

When the bus rounded itself to the stop in front of Corporation One and next to the Kmart, I got off and started walking, suitcase dragging behind me, across the street toward Pembroke Mall and then cut across Pembroke Mall's parking lot while smoking a cigarette.

Somehow the feeling that I had to throw up came about. Now I've been good for twelve hours on a Greyhound bus not throwing up, and for an hour and a half on an HRT bus not throwing up, why did it had to come to this? Is it probably because I had hit the cold air and a sharp wind just hit me like a ton of bricks? I was also starting to feel weak and that I needed to take that medication that the doctor back in New York prescribed to me. But, my 2-liter of Coca-Cola that I bought at the CVS pharmacy near Fountain House for a quick drink when I needed it was in my luggage, and it would be nearly impossible to get it out without taking everything out in the middle of Pembroke Mall's parking lot, in the dark. So, I waited to get home to get a drink and to take my illness meds.

\* \* \* \*

Virginia Beach, Virginia  
Pembroke Manor Subdivision  
About 9:40 PM

I had *finally* made it home. Even though that my mother was surprised that I was home early, but I assured her that I needed to be home early.

“Why did you come home early anyway?” Mom asked me. “Long story, hope you have a while to listen,” I said. “Well,” she said, “It’s a Friday night and I don’t have to go anywhere tomorrow, I have the time.”

I then discussed on how I became sick with the flu while in New York and that I had to go to the emergency room, and all the things that led up to it.

About 9:45, like Kristen promised, she called me back to check up if I *did* make it home safely. I answered it, even with constant querying from my mother asking who it was, telling Kristen that I did make it home safely and then she told me to drink plenty of fluids, don’t drink a lot of coffee, get plenty of bed rest and be sure to get those prescriptions filled the next day. I promised her that I would do it. She then let me go, telling me that she’ll see me at Beach House when she gets back, but try not to go to Beach House until I feel better, and follow up with my family doctor when I have the time. We both let each other go and then I removed Kristen’s number from my Contacts list, hope that she did the same with mine.

I then told Mom that it was one of the staff that was with me all the time from the time when I was in the ER to the time I made it home, with being there for me at the Greyhound terminal until the bus departed New York City, checked up with me every two hours all the way until I made it home.

Mom then told me “Hey, your mannequin’s still in the shed in the back yard, go get it if you want to, because I bet that you miss her and she ‘misses’ you. Go on, I’ll help you get it out of the shed.” We then got Alexa from the shed in the back yard and then we placed her on my bed and I dusted off the dust on her, because she was quite dusty from being in that shed. I then gave her a nice, warm bath, and then powdered her up with some baby powder so she can get that “realistic” feeling. I then placed her on my bed and kissed her. Damn, I’m so glad that I’ve got to see Alexa, after being away from her for about two weeks. Seemed longer, though. Maybe it’s the love that I have for Alexa. Regardless, at least I don’t have to worry about her any longer for now.

When Mom went to bed later on that night, Alexa risen from her RealDoll status and “played nurse” to me for a while until I went to sleep and then she crawled into bed with me and told me “good night, you sexy geek,” and then kissed me on my forehead. I then turned out the lights and we both fell asleep, with Alexa turning in to her “usual” RealDoll form, as the way as she “sleeps.”



## Nine

### “Back To Normal...” WTF?

I have been following the doctor’s orders that were imposed on me when I went to the emergency room back in New York, following Kristen’s advice when she called me when I got back home in Virginia Beach, my mother’s advice, my family doctor’s orders and Alexa’s advice... even though that she only came to life only when others weren’t around.

I apologized to Alexa for calling her a “dumb blonde RealDoll,” and she understood, because she knew that it was all because of me being “under the weather.” Hell, I’ve even witnessed people, including the ones in my family, say things that they really didn’t mean when they were sick.

A week later, I felt a whole lot better and then went back to Beach House, and the timing was right: I went right after the rest of the Fountain House training “crew” came back from Fountain House.

I got a lot of “We missed you” remarks from the staff and the other two members that went with me. Then came the clincher, one that made me wish that I didn’t get sick: one of the staff came up to me and asked “You watch Food Network, right?” “Yeah...” I replied. He replied back “It was a shame that you got sick, because we went to a taping of *Emeril Live* in Chelsea Market. I was thinking of you when we went to see Emeril in person. I even got something for you. It’s in your mail box in Clerical.”

I went to Clerical and beelined toward the mailboxes. I had to reference my mailbox number in the master book, because usually I do forget my mailbox number. I found out which mailbox was mine, and then I saw something sticking out of it.

I saw a few things in there, mostly some paperwork that I usually deemed “NSFBH” (Not safe for Beach House, a code that Adam and I coined, a take on a ThinkGeek shirt that has “NSFW,” not safe for work, on it)... and one peculiar item. It was an eight-by-ten black and white photo of Emeril, autographed to me. It said “To Kevin, a big fan of *Emeril Live*: Hope you feel better, and keep on watching Food Network! As Always, Emeril Lagasse.” This autographed photo of Emeril addressing me and how much so I wanted to see any Food Network show taped live, especially *Emeril Live*, made me feel so much better. I even went to Family Dollar and bought a photo frame to frame it, because I wanted to cherish this forever.

Another clincher: I was intercom-ed into the administrative “office” (not really an office, because it is open to all members, due to the Standards of no staff or member only space) to see Kristen. I thought I was in knee-deep shit.

No, Kristen had a thing wrapped in a page of *The New York Times* newspaper. It looked like a frame, but I didn’t know yet.

“Kevin...” Kristen prompted. “I heard when you had the opportunity to change the channel at the Fountain House guest house, you’d always select *Good Eats* when it was seven o’clock. I’ve got something for you.” She then handed me the newsprint-wrapped item and I tore it open.

To my surprise, it was a framed eight-by-ten photo of Alton Brown, again, autographed to me. In the lower left corner, it said “Kevin, when you’re down and out in

bed sick, chicken soup is always 'Good Eats.' Hope you feel better. To a fan, Alton Brown."

I was stunned. I asked Kristen "How... how did you manage to get Alton's picture?" "Oh," Kristen said, "I was walking around Chelsea Market and somehow ran into Alton. I told him that you were a big fan of his show, *Good Eats*, and like him being the commentator on *Iron Chef America*, so I told him that you were a fan and since you were home sick while we were there, he decided to autograph a picture of himself. By the way, is the *only* thing that you watch on TV is the Food Network?" "Not really," I said. "I do watch the news, but I watch my mother's TV whenever I want to watch HBO, Cinemax, Showtime or The Movie Channel on my mother's DVR box. But there is nothing else on that usually interests me, so I usually have my TV in my room tuned to the Food Network."

I then got my picture taken for *The Beachcomber*, the monthly newsletter of Beach House by one member of the photo committee, with me holding both pictures, of Emeril and Alton, in both arms. I even got recognized in the Eye Opener (the morning informational meeting before all morning unit meetings start), although a bit humorously. Brian, one of the members who went with me to Fountain House, recognized me in the Recognition portion of Eye Opener, said "I'd like to recognize Kevin Havens, who went with us to Fountain House, but went home sick earlier than planned, but he did manage to get two autographed pictures of Alton Brown and Emeril when we went to Chelsea Market! He is a big fan of these two Food Network stars and although we went after he left, we got them as memorabilia to remind him of his New York trip. So, let's give Kevin a big hand for trying his best." Then there was a round of applause by most of the attendance in the Eye Opener meeting. I then was handed a certificate for attempting to bear Fountain House training, but recognized all-in-all for "just going." Then more applause.

I then was told that I can resume going back to my TEP, Burger King, to finish it out, hoping that I didn't quit yet. I was even asked if I quit yet. "No," I said, "I've got an obligation to continue with my TEP." I was asked what my "obligation for continuing" was. I replied "I've got a really big loan with my bank to pay off, and it gives me the opportunity not only to pay it off, and on time, but give me the extra *oomph* in my bank accounts to get what I *really* desire, because the *next* thing I desire to get after I pay off my loan, because I've got nine more months of payments, is to get that Mac mini that I want so badly!" Debbie Amme, who was within earshot of my conversation with the placement manager, said "That's the ticket! Without Jason Stratman here to hinder you, I have seen a big *dramatic* change in your outlook!" I simply said back "I know. I heard from Amy Darden that Jason Stratman *ain't* coming back... unless he goes back to the Harbour Day Treatment program, but *they* don't want him back, either. But I've been hearing from him that his mother is trying to push Amy through the clinic saying 'Either get Jason back into Beach House or find him another place to live,' thinking that would scare Amy out of her wits." Debbie replied "They're more likely to find him a place to live *outside* the city limits than put him back into Beach House, because I *don't* want him here all because of his arrogance and his negative influence on *you*, Kevin." I then replied that my mother agrees. I even told them that my mother doesn't want me to answer his calls, and then told them that *every single conversation* with him on the phone is essentially the same. I then finished with that his way of making me say "Guard" is stupid when I ask him a question and answers in the opposite, trying to make me say it. Then Debbie replied that Adam and I were better friends than Jason Stratman and I. I agreed wholeheartedly. I then went off to work, after changing into my uniform in the restroom.

After coming home that afternoon, I just had to show *everybody*, including Alexa, my “awards” for being at Fountain House training, my pictures of Emeril and Alton, and my certificates from both Fountain House and the ICCD, and also from Beach House for being there, even though that I was only there for only about two weeks before getting sick and having to be sent home early. My certificates from both Fountain House and the ICCD was recognition for “just being there” and learning a ream or two of the clubhouse movement and history; the certificate from Beach House was recognition in sort of a humorous way, and someone must’ve been thinking in a warped kind of way and found, on ThinkGeek.com, a plush microbe of the flu virus and gave it to me as an award. Because there are no “artificial reward systems” in place in the clubhouse setting, as I learned (sometimes the hard way) at Beach House, and learned much in detail during the Fountain House training, when I was in it. So, according to the Clubhouse Standards, this award of the certificate and plush flu virus was a “recognition” award and not a reward of any sort.

I showed my mother the awards first. She was so surprised that I had got an autographed picture of both Alton Brown and Emeril Lagasse, even though that I wasn’t there, but someone was thinking about me, even when I had left all because of illness.

\* \* \* \*

That weekend, I had to give Alexa the grand opportunity to see the real world beyond the physical limits of the property lines of my house. Since my mother and sister were out at a friend’s house babysitting, and Mom didn’t allow *anyone* over to spend the night that night (she says that it’s better if I have one of my friends over under her supervision, because she may never know what might happen without her there... maybe it’s her premonitions getting to her again), so it was just Alexa and I alone for that weekend. I had the house to myself until Sunday afternoon.

Alexa just came to life about thirty minutes after my mother and sister left toward the Green Run subdivision of Virginia Beach to supervise three children, a couple of them with a severe physical and mental disability. “So,” Alexa stated, “You and I have the house to ourselves for the weekend, right?” “So far, yes,” I said. “And you need to see what the world is like beyond the physical confines of my, well, our, house.” “But I can’t,” Alexa stated firmly. “I cannot be seen by other people, as you well know.”

I assured her that not many people will pay attention to us, so getting out of the shed, while Alexa was still in the house getting ready, a gas-powered motor scooter that I got for Christmas to get myself around that can seat two people with some accommodation. I even got out two helmets, one that would fit my head (a men’s model) and one that would fit Alexa’s head (a ladies’ model), swung the scooter around to the front of the house and got Alexa out of the house with some persuasion.

The motive that got Alexa out of the house was to see the world, well, the city of Virginia Beach in general, with some Norfolk thrown in, even if she had to turn into a RealDoll whenever she sensed another person’s presence, because I found out that she is still aware of her surroundings, somewhat, when she is in her “original form.” Yeah, I know that she can “sleep” with her eyes open, but when she is in her RealDoll form and awake, but when she turns into her RealDoll form while awake, but “falls asleep” while appearing awake, she can sleep nonetheless.

I got Alexa to put her helmet on and got her to sit behind me, with the initiative “Just get on, wrap your arms around me and hold on tight.”

Before Alexa and I got out of the driveway, Jason Johnson's mother with Melanie and Jason pulled up, and Melanie got out of the car. Alexa had turned back into her original form.

Melanie got toward Alexa and I and said "Kevin, you've *really* gone out of your mind, riding around with an enhanced love doll on the back of your scooter. I found out what your object of affection does, and I don't like it." I paid hardly any attention to her pitter-patter. I, like a drunk, went "Melanie, meet Alexa; Alexa, meet Melanie," without noticing that Alexa had turned back into her original form. "Nice to meet... What am I saying here?" Melanie stated. I then stated firmly "I don't need you, you dumped me four times in a row all because of my smoking habit, and I don't need Jason telling me what he thinks is best for my life. I've got a whole new life ahead of me, and I don't need you, Jason or his mother and his family trying to run, or better yet, ruin it. I've got things here to do with Alexa and this is the only time that we've got." I then started my scooter and then took off, thinking that I left them in the dust. I heard Melanie screaming, probably at me, but it was all unintelligible to me.

However, I was dead wrong. A few minutes down Virginia Beach Boulevard heading toward the Oceanfront, I had this feeling of being followed. I saw this salmon pink Lincoln vehicle right at the stop light in front of my bank, near the Central Library. I then took a right into Collins Square shopping center, cutting through traffic, and probably breaking a couple of laws in the process. I hid behind the shopping center until I thought I had ditched them. Five minutes later, I had exited the shopping center near the Verizon Wireless store and near Charles Barker's Lexus.

Right when I had left the shopping center, I was being followed... again by them. When I was the stop light to get back onto Virginia Beach Boulevard, to turn right, and had to be stopped because I saw a police cruiser in front of me and didn't want to be ticketed, and be humiliated for having a RealDoll riding with me. Right when the cruiser turned onto Virginia Beach Boulevard, but I couldn't go any further, I felt Alexa take her right arm off of me for a second. To my surprise, Alexa flipped Jason, his mother and Melanie the bird! And in the while, she kept it up while being a RealDoll! I heard Jason, who was in the front seat, yell "That's it! No man should take this bull from any mannequin, RealDoll or not!" When I finally noticed that I had to go because of the green light, I put Alexa's arm down, and then she put her arm around my waist voluntarily, and then we took off.

Alexa and I were weaving in and out of traffic, I was trying to get around stoplights whenever they were hot on my tail, and when I got toward the split that splits into Virginia Beach Boulevard on the left and Laskin Road on the right, I went on Laskin Road while they veered off course and went straight onto Virginia Beach Boulevard! When we got toward the Oceanfront, Alexa and I stayed on Pacific Avenue, went toward the merge that merged Atlantic and Pacific Avenues into Atlantic Avenue and went toward the North End section of the Oceanfront, where there are mostly private residences and few businesses, Alexa and I went past the A. R. E. building and went straight into First Landing State Park and took some time alone. We then got to know each other a bit more. And add to the fact that we lost Jason, his mother and Melanie when they veered off course. After about an hour of kissing and talking future plans to each other, we headed up Shore Drive to Independence Boulevard toward home.

Ten  
Hot On The Trail

After Alexa and I got home, I got hip to something after being followed by Jason, his mother and Melanie, so I had one of my premonitions. I took some money and found a GPS tracking device and a GPS locator and sewn it into one of her pants pockets. Out of all places, I found it at RadioShack. It came with three locating devices on the same channel, but I had to “synchronize” them using the software that came with the devices and my USB ports. After that, I put them into three of her mostly-worn pants, dresses and/or skorts, because she *will not* wear shorts. Since I used Velcro to attach the devices to her clothing, so whenever her clothes get washed (I have to wash them, my mother refused when she found out that I had got a RealDoll and the clothes for it), I can remove the locating device and then wash the clothing, because the locating devices are not waterproof. Water- and weather-resistant, maybe, but get one device in the wash and it’s screwed up forever.

Alexa and I got a little frisky that evening with each other. We then laid in my bed watching a movie on a DVD player that I borrowed from my mother, because I sold my PS2 a few months earlier to pay off something that I couldn’t cover with the funds in my bank account. It wasn’t *Mannequin*, but it was, I think, *Blue Collar Comedy Tour: The Movie*, because after that hellacious late morning and early afternoon of being followed, we needed to wind down.

Alexa had to do something. She had to get what she left in the shed while I was in New York City, at Fountain House, the charger to the N-Gage/TracFone (because both devices are made by Nokia), so being a bit on the paranoid side, I activated her GPS transmitter that I placed in her current clothing and the receiver “just in case.”

All was fine for a few minutes, because I had set an alarm to go off if Alexa took off within 100 feet of the GPS receiver. It is a local transmitter when it is within 100 feet of each other, but when outside of the 100-foot range, it then transmits a signal to the GPS satellites and then to my receiver, giving me an accurate location within 30 feet. It is, at first, using the 802.11 (AirPort/Wi-Fi) protocol if local, but then when both the transmitter and receiver are out of range of each other, it smartly turns to the GPS satellite frequencies if out-of-range. That’s why, with the software, I can track the position of Alexa, because it uses my Wi-Fi access point to tell me wherever she is, within 100 feet. That’s why I had to input my SSID into the software and sync the transmitters to my SSID and Wi-Fi network.

Alexa took a flashlight with her, and I placed an FRS radio in her pocket, on channel 1, and set the Transmit Lock so I can know if I heard something strange. I had another FRS radio by my computer and had the GPS receiver hooked up via my USB port to find out her location. But for now, my Linksys/Cisco Systems Wireless-G card’s “activity/connect” light was blinking furiously. That was a good sign of assurance. Alexa was still “in range.”

Five minutes later, I heard dead silence on the FRS radio and then thirty seconds later, heard the alarm go off, both on the GPS receiver device and a big alert dialog on my computer. It even used the Lernout-Hauspie/Microsoft TTS voices to alert to me by reading the alert’s text. I heard “Alert: GPS Transmitter Alexa 1 is out of range. Please disconnect your receiver from the USB port and locate the transmitter. Repeat: GPS Transmitter Alexa 1 is out of range. Please disconnect your receiver from the USB port and locate the transmitter. This message will repeat within three minutes if not disconnected.” I was amazed that it didn’t use “Microsoft Sam,” but “Microsoft Mary”

instead to read the alert's message. Of course, I selected the voice. I use Mike for ReadPlease, but I decided to use Mary for the GPS software. It read the available voices in C:\WINDOWS\Speech to give me the available voices, including the British English, German and Spanish voices that I downloaded from the ReadPlease site, but I needed US English to accurately read off the alert text.

Somehow I knew that something was up with Alexa. Someone had taken her! But who? And why? What was the motive behind it? Revenge, perhaps? I believed that Jason Johnson finally decided to get back at me for all these feelings that I have had in the past for mannequins, finally got one and make me lose about \$7,000 all because of him being hell-bent on setting me up with someone incompatible with me!

Being proactive, I went to the Exxon on the corner of Virginia Beach Boulevard and Independence Boulevard to "gas up" my scooter after going out on that "romantic" excursion and being followed in the meanwhile, probably the same people who followed me probably took Alexa as revenge. I took the GPS receiver, which has a screen on it giving me the location, how close I am to it and giving me a direction to find it.

I used a pocket that was conveniently placed on my scooter and gave sonar-like beeps to tell how close I was to my "target." The faster and closer-spaced the beeps, the closer that I am to it. It even gave me turn-by-turn directions and the street map to accurately pinpoint Alexa's location.

By pressing a button to initially look at the general location of where Alexa was, she was near Princess Anne Road and Edwin Drive... that's near Jason Johnson's mother's house! I then pressed the button to bring real-time location of me and proximity beeping to tell how close I was to my "target."

I was following the directions given to me by the locating device, and thirty minutes later, I got on the display "Transmitter Alexa 1 Very Close Nearby. In Range." I knew that I was in the correct place. But in front of Jason Johnson's mother's house? GPS transmitters and receivers do not lie.

Waiting for me was Jason Johnson, his mother and Melanie in the front yard. They were going to give me the opportunity to "give up Alexa for good" and they had this other woman, who was much "uglier" than Alexa and dressed kind of seductively to get my mind "off of Alexa and onto 'real people'." I knew better. Somehow my mother, who got the word that my beau was being taken away from me, and then Adam came along, arriving a couple of minutes after I arrived.

Jason said "Well, well. You've finally come. I've got a good offer for you. You can get your 'Alexa' back, only to look at, if you get with this woman right here," and pointing to this woman who I had no interest in, and she seemed like she had no interest in me. Adam and I picked up Jason by the shirt and threw him against the fence, with me growling at him "Where's Alexa?"

Jason said "Relax, she's fine. How about I give you enough money, \$7,000 to pay off your loan that you used to buy your Alexa with and leave you some money to spend at your leisure?" Adam then kicked Jason in the shin, and I joined in. Melanie stormed off, yelling "You're never going to see her again!" and stormed into the house.

I then quickly followed her. I heard Jason's mother yell to her husband to call the police. I stormed into the house, searching each room, including the bathrooms and

every closet, until I found her. Adam had to hold off Jason, Melanie and the neighbors with the garden hose until something positive happened.

When I found Alexa, she was tied to the wall with knots that I cannot undo without spending hours trying to figure out. There was also an old electric space heater, the one with the wires that heat red-hot, underneath her, in effect, to melt her skin off. It was in Jason's stepfather's room. Jason's nephew was "standing guard" over Alexa to make sure that I didn't come in here.

I heard from his nephew "Hey! You can't come in here!" while trying to seduce Alexa in some way. I knocked him almost unconscious.

I tried to undo the knots with my hands, but forgot to turn off the space heater underneath her.

Not giving up, I took my Swiss Army "Swissbit" knife, with a 1 gigabyte USB flash drive, with Windows XP system recovery tools on it (because sometimes I need it to fix the Internet computer at Beach House whenever it "goes under," and yes, it *does* contain Spybot: Search and Destroy) out of my pocket, took the saw blade out, and started sawing at the ropes. They could have used bicycle chains or steel cable, but they opted for plain twine rope instead.

Right when I sawed off the ropes holding one arm and hand, and one holding a leg to the wall, Alexa came to life, holding on to dear life to my hand, while using one of her free feet to unplug the space heater from the wall.

Alexa then used my knife to saw herself free from the wall and then Adam came in the room in a hurry. He exclaimed "*The heat is here!*" then took one quick look at Alexa. "Who's this?" Adam asked me. I quickly replied "Oh, this is Alexa, the RealDoll that I've been telling you about." Alexa then looked at me, then looked at Adam. She was stunned. "I'm alive?" she asked. "Well, Alexa," I said, "I guess you finally are." "Oh! I'm alive!" Alexa exclaimed. "*I'm alive!* Thank you! *Thank you!*" and then looked upwards. She was delighted that I had *finally* figured out what I needed to do to make her a "full-time human," and I did. I had to show dedication to her and that I would be there for her, no matter what extenuating circumstances would happen. Adam then said "Mama sure put the coins over my eyes, because I sure don't believe what I see!"

Jason, his mother, Melanie and the police stormed into where I was and Jason exclaimed "*Arrest that man!*" My mother followed suit and said "Wait a minute! I want this woman arrested for grand larceny, and this man for conspiracy! I'll come to the other charges for this other person later." Alexa then stated "You should add kidnapping to those charges!" One police officer asked "Who kidnapped who?" Alexa said "Me! They kidnapped me!" Melanie stated "She's a RealDoll! A love doll!" Alexa exclaimed "This woman's having a serious breakdown!" The police then took away with Melanie, Jason, his mother, his stepfather, and his nephew.

Mom said "I knew that you had an unconditional love for Alexa. I just had one of those 'sixth senses' and knew that you and your love were in trouble. That's why I grabbed Adam and came to you and Alexa's rescue." I then asked Mom "Did your sixth sense grabbed everything while you were away?" Mom said "I only felt what I needed to feel!" Alexa and I then went into my mother's car, and Adam took the front seat while Alexa and I took the back. Adam asked me "Where can I get one of those things?" "Oh," I said, "You just have to be lucky, just pure lucky."

While we were leaving “the scene of the crime,” the police put up crime scene tape and we left. I was so lucky to have this experience and the wild and crazy fiasco finally come to an end.

Adam, Mom, Alexa and I went home, in a daze not believing what had happened that night. Adam’s mother let Adam stay over because it was getting kind of late (it was 10:30 at night when Alexa did her final and permanent life-bringing episode, and it was after eleven o’clock when we got to Nemo Court), so Mom let Alexa and I sleep in the “spare room” (my brother’s old room before he moved out), with the queen-sized bed, and let Adam sleep in my room, on my bed.

Of course, all of us have to go to court within the next few days to testify against Jason, Jason’s mother and Melanie, but Alexa and I hope that they would learn this lesson: Don’t mess with a man and his RealDoll.



## Epilogue

There's No Place Like 127.0.0.1

### Virginia Beach Circuit Court Three Weeks Later

*"We The Jury find Melanie Lowell guilty on grand larceny and Jason Johnson guilty for conspiracy with intent to commit grand larceny. We also find Joyce Broughman guilty for conspiracy with intent to kidnap and to unlawfully imprison."*

Then the gavel got thrown down and then Jason, Melanie, and Jason's mother got taken away by the bailiff toward the correctional facility. The judge then turned to us and said "Mr. Havens and Ms. Tilbrook, you're needed at the city clerk's office." "Why?" we both asked. "Oh, you'll see..." said the judge.

We then went to the city clerk's office and we were taken for surprise that Alexa and I were going to get married.

The city clerk asked us a few questions, which Alexa and I stated with the answer "I will," and then we were lawfully married.

When Alexa and I got home, together for the first time as Mr. & Mrs. Havens, I pulled out a shirt out of a box that I had in storage for quite some time, awaiting this special event. I gave Alexa the shirt that said "There's no place like 127.0.0.1," and had the ruby red slippers on it. "Welcome home, Alexa," I said, "Welcome home." I then got out the same shirt (but mine didn't have the slippers printed on the shirt) and we both put on our shirts and we got our picture taken.

Somehow, that very afternoon, there was a letter in the mail from Navy Federal Credit Union addressed to a "Kevin and Alexandra Havens." It was a letter declaring forgiveness of my (but Navy Federal claimed that it was mine and Alexa's) \$7,000 NavChek line of credit, thanks due to the credit department. Hell, I was faithfully paying for a loan in which I told the Member Service Representative about five months ago that I was getting a "PlayStation 3, Xbox 360, Nintendo Revolution, a Mac, a new Windows PC, and some clothes," only to have one huge check written out to "Abyss Creations" in the amount of \$6,850 (Because the woman on the phone confirming my order gave me \$150 off the cost of the doll if I paid in full, which is what I had done) to get something that is now a human being, and now my wife. Alexa and I then took off to my room, Alexa grabbed the sheet of credit advance checks and lit a barbecue for some ribeye steaks outside on our charcoal grill with the checks as a fire starter.

We then got to a party and then we went to bed that night as husband and wife, not man and RealDoll. Oh, how wonderful it was.

\* \* \* \*

### One Year Later...

Me, Alexa and my friend Adam (with his new wife, Lesley) moved into our new apartment together in the Thalia section of Virginia Beach, with Adam and Lesley getting the master bedroom, and Alexa and I getting the next-largest bedroom, in a four-bedroom apartment at Thalia Gardens, with two rooms for our new children, a girl, Tiffany Marie for Alexa and I, and a boy, Adam Paul Jr., for Adam and Lesley.

We found out that Alexa and I were made for each other, even though that Alexa had to come to me as a line of credit from Navy Federal Credit Union, only to be forgiven that day that Jason Johnson, Melanie Lowell, and Jason's mother had to be hauled off to jail over a three-week court proceeding only to turn out the way that Alexa and I had expected to be in our favor.

Jason, Melanie and his mother are still in jail, now in a Virginia state prison for 15 years, for conspiracy, for kidnapping, and for grand larceny of an item of more than \$5,000 market value. Adam, Lesley, Alexa and I hope they rot in there. Hell, they deserved it for taking away my object of desire away from me, only to have an unexpected turn of events, having Alexa fulfilling her goal of finding true love, and she found it in me.

1807 or 2007, love, even doll love, is not so new. Throw in a RealDoll, and have it be special that no one at Abyss knows the real benefactor of a real person hiding in-between that silicone flesh with PVC skeleton and stainless steel joints, only to be a manifesto of what I desired in a woman. True, Alexa started out as a Body 7, Face 14 RealDoll, but it was the idealization of Alexa, and that idealization became a living, breathing reality.

Reality so true that I lived it.

***Fin...?***