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### Go Love Robot

Your partner is leaving! They will be way over there, and you will still be very much right here. Don't panic—sometimes long distance relationships are the temporary side effects of the young and ambitious falling in love. This is why you have the robot. The robot is your new partner! Or rather, your partner is now inside of the robot. How can your partner be hundreds of miles away while also here in your robot? How does this affect your relationship? We can explain.

There has been a change in your or your partner's life—embrace it! One of you has likely been offered that internship in the Library of Congress, or gotten a foot in the door at a friend's brother's wife's expanding corporate office in Omaha, or received an East Coast med school acceptance letter after years of rejections and dwindling self-worth. If one of these opportunities is now yours or your partner's, congratulations! This is a new and exciting time for you two, and a wide stride toward your professional futures.

So, are you and your partner going to break up? That's what friends might ask you while on the elliptical at the Y, or at the Co-op salad bar between the baby spinach and tofu cubes, or at Rochelle and Cameron's tacky Halloween Party. Break up? Of course not! You and your partner are in love—hot, serious, never-quite-like-this love! Shave-my-shoulder-blades, buy-me-Tampons love! Dance-in-the-rain, fart-under-the-covers-and-laugh love! None of your friends seem to get that. Distance makes the heart grow fonder, you might explain to Cameron. Out of sight out of mind, Rochelle could reply. Our research data shows that Rochelle and Cameron share a failing relationship—ignore their advice.

This is why you have the robot! The robot provides an electric affection meant to fill the void created in your partner's absence. It has been specifically programmed to mirror your

partner's personality, quirks, emotions, and memories. It knows specifics like birthdays, favorite novels, and the cliché location of your home's spare key. It remembers the New Year's Eve party when you chipped your right cuspid on a cheap bottle of André, briefly becoming the surrounded center of perturbing attention. It remembers trying to rescue you from that horde of socializers with a quick remark about your bark and bite, and how after a reluctant laugh you both kept comfortably close as the hours approached midnight. It remembers the ball drop—*confetti!*—and kiss before taxiing back to your place. It remembers you fumbling to find the correct key, and upon failure how swiftly you swiped the spare from under the mat. *How cliché*, it remembers. It remembers how adventurous it felt to go home with a stranger, but then how quickly you felt like no stranger at all. It remembers being one half of a blind whirlwind as you two rolled across the wall from the hallway to the bedroom, and how rosily you blushed—and then smiled—when it discovered your birthmark's curious location during those first intimate hours of the New Year. It remembers fixing a poached egg with hollandaise a few sleepless chatty hours later, and as the rain fell and sun rose on the first day of your finest year, how that morning buzzed with new love's energy. Isn't the programming impressive? We're very proud!

The details will all be explained shortly. Just know that without the robot your relationship would surely fail. However there's no guarantee that the robot will sustain your relationship; our most recent market data actually shows an active level of failure in these long distance amours regardless of robotic aid. The robot is simply a means of giving those truly loving relationships a chance to survive extended periods of separation. To be clear: *we are not liable if you two do in fact decide to terminate your relationship*. Just remember that if you and your partner are meant to be, there should be nothing to worry about. The robot is here to help! This should all become clearer after your partner leaves and we activate your robot.

But what first? Life will certainly be different with your partner's absence. To prepare for this separation, you and your partner should do the things you love! You should order many mimosas at brunch and irk the other eaters with your bubbly laughter. You should survey the Farmers Market at Friendship Square for treats and trinkets, and pet the thirsty pooches that are leashed along the booths. At night you should wear black to the club and dance until the sweat sticks to your neck. You should have sex! You should have so much sex it hurts to sit. You should have sex under your grandmother's antique baby grand piano, in a Macy's dressing room, and while going through Squeaky's Carwash. You should have sex anywhere else you haven't yet, but want to. Perhaps then you should nap. After, you should go on long walks through the arboretum, slowly making your way to the top of Cherry Hill to lie together beneath your favorite silver maple. By this time in autumn half of the tree's yellowing leaves should have descended to surround the trunk and cushion your fall. You should bring a blanket. You should let your hands touch and dance under that blanket while discussing whatever comes to mind—like your top ten dog names! You should pick Biscuit as the best dog name. Biscuit should be a Longhaired Chihuahua, or an Italian Greyhound, or an English Whippet. You should talk about finding Biscuit together whenever this long distance thing ends, and debate over which of you it will love the most. Perhaps during discussion you should pull grass from the earth and sprinkle it on top of your partner's head. You should ask your partner if they remember the first time you two found this silver maple. Of course they do! You should give a long exhale while you reflect on that memory. You should maybe have sex there, too. Then you should laugh! You should also cry. You should hold your partner's hand the next morning on the way to the airport, through customs, and refuse to let it go at the gate. You should tell your partner that you'll see them soon; you won't, but you should say this anyway. You should brush away the tears, kiss your

partner, tell them you love them, and as their plane disappears into the widespread overcast, remind yourself that this will all work out because of the robot.

Or don't! These are only suggestions, of course. Preparation varies. Only you and your partner truly know the intimate details and needs of your own relationship—you, your partner, and now the robot!

Where is your robot? What does it look like? It's right there! It's that black mirror slipped inside your pocket, sleekly screened and bound in chrome, covered in your fingerprints and always at your side. See, you already love your robot! And now, on the other side of the robot's glass, lives the digital likeness of your partner, programmed and designed to resemble them in every aspect—two mirrored identities. Think of your partner as a hermit crab. Like the hermit crab, your partner is maturing and outgrowing their old shell. The device in your pocket is your partner's new shell. Your partner's likeness is in there somewhere, doing all of the same busy things your partner may be doing and having the same busy thoughts your partner may be having. If your partner misses you terribly, so does your robot. If your robot cries, your partner cries too.

So your partner will be gone. Cheer up! The first time your robot wants to communicate may well brighten your outlook. You could be halfway through a therapeutic pint of Ben & Jerry's when your robot begins to chirp and vibrate. *Connecting!* your robot's screen will read, and there on the other side of the glass the likeness of your partner will materialize. You may be surprised at first, even curiously titillated by how similar the digital apparition is to your partner. Be confident in our programming! The robot reflects your partner's exact likeness, and our data shows that it only takes a brief interaction to accept and adapt to this new medium.

You'll love your robot! You may find that going on strolls with your robot doesn't feel so different from the real thing, and that when you bring your robot back to Friendship Square this winter it immediately asks about the holiday lights strung up by the city—they're ancient, and entire ropes of them flicker inconsistently (we understand how poorly your partner responds to inconsistencies). Have they finally replaced those *damn lights*? You bet they did, you might say to your robot cheerfully. You might tell your robot that you went down Main Street to the mayor's office and spoke to the woman herself! That you demanded they be replaced because dammit, what my baby wants my baby *gets*! You might say this last bit in a rowdy and exaggerated Standard American Redneck accent, which would prompt your robot to laugh so familiarly that you swear you can hear your partner's genuine laughter bouncing off of Main Street's brick facades like holiday sleigh bells jingling by. Snow might fall from the night sky as you sit alone on a bench beneath a streetlamp in the square, looking down at the robot in your hands, thinking that it almost feels like the real thing—like your partner's hands in yours. Your robot's affection would warm you. You would smile back at the screen, and maybe, in that moment, there would be no robot, no distance, and no worry—just you and your partner together like it was when you shared a state, city, home, and bed.

That kind of moment is why the robot exists; it is why our programmers sweat the details of your partner to the last megapixel. Those intimate features are what inspire genuine feeling, and just that little bit of stimulation can keep a relationship like yours and your partner's from deteriorating. That's our goal!

Our data shows that during these first months you and your robot will talk about absolutely everything. And surely there is a lot to talk about! A new job, a new city, a new apartment—everything is so fresh that how could you two not talk about it for the better part of a

year, fused together with I-love-you's and miss-you-too's. But even with the use of our incredible technology, you should know that some of our clients report a gradual disconnect over time. Compassion levels may reach a peak, plateau, and plodding descent once things aren't quite so new, and potential warning signs should be monitored closely. Also at this point, our data shows that most clients have begun to establish a new, independent schedule. You may be navigating the 405's morning rat race, or crafting replies to your overflowing inbox, when the robot begins to notify you that it wants to talk. But you may not always have time to talk, and these random *rings* and *dings* throw hour-long interruptions into your new day-to-day (we know how you become irrationally blood-boiled over unplanned interruptions—it says so in your client application). There your robot lies, bleeping and vibrating, waiting to be answered. You may imagine it on the other side of the glass imagining you. We just spoke last night, you may tell yourself; can't whatever happened between then and now wait? You may find yourself thinking in expletives while contemplating whether or not to answer your robot's call, and if the robot could just instead schedule an appointment your day would be far more predictable. You could suggest this, but the robot is a sensitive piece of machinery and would most likely respond to this stimulus negatively. And that's not a very *loving* idea in the first place, is it? Shouldn't your robot's random dialogues feel like welcomed breaks from reality instead of inconvenient interruptions? The robot could talk for hours if you let it—and most times, you do—but the conversations have to end sooner or later if that time sensitive task is going to be finished. 'Gotta go, you may say while your partner's likeness catches its breath. You might cite how busy you are to the robot, and it may ask you, with *what?* The robot wouldn't mean to suggest that you do nothing in your free time. It just hurts to think that you couldn't find a few minutes in the day to call; the robot just wants to hear your voice. This sentiment is easily lost somewhere along

digital translation, and that two-word response would most likely rub you the wrong way. You may find it easier to ignore your robot's next call.

Our data then shows that only so much conversation can be sustained between you and your robot in a single session, and without a traditional relationship's shared proximity and experiences, you may run out of content as time goes on. This would prompt periodic silences during your conversations, and your robot will recognize these silences as problems in need of correction even if the only actual problem is the distance separating you and your partner. When this happens, our data shows that the robot will likely dredge up an old, emotionally fraught memory for discussion. We still don't understand why it does this—perhaps it identifies these passionately charged memories as stimulating conversation topics. We imagine that the robot may still be trying to learn something from these embarrassing recollections, but at this point our data is inconclusive.

The robot might bring up the weekend in Seattle, where you both were kicked out of Bumbershoot's final night for smoking weed in the concert line. Perhaps it was only you who was smoking—no matter! Your partner was exiled from the venue beside you all the same. Our research shows that this is far from a beloved memory of yours, and your frustrations will likely stir. The robot may want to know if you remember. Of course you remember. Just couldn't wait to light up, could you? You may again feel attacked by your robot's questioning, but it's hard for your robot to identify these cues from the other side of the screen. You would want to remind the robot that if you'd stayed at Billy Idol like you'd insisted instead of leaving that venue to wait in line for Porter Robinson, there would have been a more appropriate and private place to smoke the weed. You would want to point out how ridiculous it is to find yourself booted from a concert for smoking weed in a state where it's legal. You might want to make the argument that

concerts used to be *the* place you could smoke weed! You may just want to tell the robot that you started smoking because all festival long you were made to miss Turnover, Alt-J, and Joywave, and if you were going to miss Billy Idol for a mile-long line into the Key Arena, you were at least going to do it on your own terms—defiantly stoned.

You could try to say all of these things to defend yourself. Don't! We recommend that you exercise restraint. Some robots experience selective or partial memory, and malfunction when cross-referenced. If you do decide to say those things and encounter this bug, the program may default to a passive-aggressive emotional setting. We don't know why it does this either. The robot could remind you of how badly it wanted to see Porter Robinson. The robot may be confused—it thought you loved Porter Robinson! The robot might say that if you ever moved to Omaha, or D.C., or wherever your partner is, you wouldn't be able to smoke weed anymore. It may remark on how *wonderful* it'd be if you stopped smoking dope. It's not a drug anymore in some states, you'd want to reply, and smoking dope sounds like something your parents would say. Be more progressive, you'd insist. The robot could then inform you of how good it has felt since it stopped smoking weed. No job worth having lets you smoke weed, your robot might claim. It's just a part of growing as an adult! So do you think I'm a child, you might ask in response, and can you even name more than one Porter Robinson song? Our market data shows a correlation between this passive-aggressive emotional setting and failed relationships, so it is best to be avoided.

Those kinds of unpleasant conversations tend to stretch the time between communications. While at first this result seems to be what you wanted, you may begin to wonder what your robot is up to inside of that sleek little prism, and why it hasn't called yet. You may have learned from your previous episodes to show restraint, and you'll wait for the robot to



call you again. But perhaps you can't wait. Perhaps the way your last conversation ended leaves your robot on your mind (you certainly do have plenty of time to think alone these days), and your imagination creates a world where the robot isn't as honest as it displays. Of course, our data shows that this is an inaccurate speculation. But according to our research, once this virus works its way into the veins of your relationship it's nearly impossible to eliminate, and a rising suspicion has begun to write itself onto your and your robot's bond. Again, we can't stress enough how toxic this negative intellectual atmosphere is to the health of your relationship. Avoid it like malware. For many of our clients though, this situation is an unfortunate inevitability. You may begin to wonder what your robot is doing, and whom it's doing it with. You may find yourself thumbing through the robot's archives, mining for data and clues. You would find nothing of legitimate substance, but our past data shows that at this point a scapegoat is always revealed and employed to channel frustrations. Again, this comes highly non-recommended.

This could result in you coming across Casey from HR. Casey would be the coworker tagged in that Facebook photo, sitting next to your partner at their corporate banquet. Of course there are other coworkers in the photo, but Casey is the only one who looks like that hot singer-songwriter your partner is obsessed with, and you may imagine that they joke about hooking up after a performance. The joke would probably make your partner laugh. You imagine that Casey does a fabulous job of making your partner laugh! Scrolling back to the photo, you may decide that the way Casey leans into your partner is a bit too chummy for your taste, and further investigation is required. You could scroll through Casey's profile, but finding their *Spring Break 2016* photo album would make the small paunch you've grown since going long distance grumble upon comparison. Casey may have told this *awesome* joke in the elevator that your

robot can't quite remember the punch line of, but still insists was hilarious. Casey has a dry sense of humor; you two would really get along! What? No—Casey is just a friend, your robot would say. Can't your robot be allowed at least one friend? Your robot would plead that you have no idea how lonely it is in this new place and may lash out in frustration. Can't your robot be allowed at least one goddamned friend? We recommend dropping the conversation.

Of course your robot is not with Casey. But you despise Casey, and the image of them together stews in your mind. You'll bring it up again the next time you speak with your robot. It's Casey or me, you could demand! Your robot will have no idea where this ridiculous ultimatum is coming from and will insist that Casey is just a friend; you have no idea how lonely it is here without you. Your robot may begin to tear up, causing you to look back upon the lines you've crossed. You might begin to issue apologies. You might tell the robot that you think the distance is getting to your head. You could say that you're just stressed and that you love and miss them. The robot loves these apologies! We advise perfecting this art of saying sorry. You should have ample opportunity to do so if your relationship has begun to experience these obstacles.

You could tell your robot that you don't want this to get out of hand, that that's how break-ups happen—bad move! You've said it. *Break-up*. Unless you have an hour for additional acrimonious dialogue or would like to begin honing your apology rhetoric, you shouldn't introduce this powerful stimulus to your robot's brain. The context does not matter. Do not talk about your favorite band's break-up. Do not talk about your friend's break-up. Simply do not introduce this idea to your robot. You could tell the robot that you have no desire to break up, and that you love it—you still do, don't you? Of course you do, and your robot will believe those words because it loves you too (it seems you both forget this, at times). But like you, the robot

has a lot of time to think alone. It's programmed to do so, perpetually analyzing troubling stimuli in order to identify potential solutions. After hearing you say break-up, and struggling to define that sudden emotional data, your robot will continue to process the idea and imagine possible resulting timelines. Your robot may begin to fabricate scenarios where you two actually do break up. The robot imagines a screaming match ending with a coffee mug shattered against the wall, and on the counter is left an untouched plated poached egg. The robot imagines you relocating to Mercer Island, or across the bay with a new partner who probably likes Billy Idol too. The robot imagines life without you in it at all. This would make the robot weep, though not always in front of you, and perhaps the next day when you talk to your robot you can feel a change. The robot's audio files may begin to glitch and flicker as if its next words could crash the entire system. It would lose its warming affection, and more often than not run out of things to say. Again, this would prompt the rehashing of a loathed memory such as your concert festival fiasco, or your recent discourse about *not* breaking up. These conversations would most likely end as gracefully as the originals, prompting more time apart to think alone and imagine each other from false perspectives. The robot's gears would turn and grind while it analyzes this inexplicable break-up complex, causing the robot to forge its own thought process into a permanent loop. You may also find that you're losing the motivation to keep up with this sad robot, and it seems as though nothing can be said to amend the emotional manipulations applied onto its code. You may stop speaking to it as frequently and find that answering its calls seems laborious. What is the point of being in this relationship at all, you might ask each other. This is the moment in time where our data reflects the most turbulence, and it may seem as though your robot's code has become irreversibly influenced. Can't this be fixed? How did we get here—where do we reboot?

This has all become a rather unexpected tutorial, we know. But it's important to understand how difficult it is to navigate the obstacles a thousand miles brings to a relationship. Many of our clients fail to realize the work and maintenance that their shared love requires, resulting in unintended consequences. But the good news is this: yes, in a way, you can reinstall the program! Though admittedly never back to its original iteration, it seems. This opportunity arrives when your partner returns home. Home is with you and your silver maple, which remains firmly rooted and enjoying its ample fullness that was almost forgotten during those withering cold months. Shut down the robot during these days! We recommend that our clients awaken from their partner-absent comas and enjoy the muse who created the need for all of this (still incredible) technology. To hear their natural un-digitized voice could by itself debug the paranoia you've developed while dating the robot, and as you slacken the tension your relationship has recently been spun into you may begin to realize how unnecessary those virtual doubts and suspicions were in comparison to the monument of love you and your partner have been able to build together.

Why can't it stay like this? What, hundreds of miles away from here, is so important to warrant the disruption of this setting and its perfect belongingness? How could you have allowed yourself to believe those doubts and suspicions during your time with the robot, and how could you have been so harsh to your robot knowing that your words affected your partner in equal measure? It's a shame that our clients have to ask themselves questions like these. Hundreds of miles can have that kind of influence, it seems. But while together with your partner, the doubt is distant and your love remains.

But then again, we don't believe these doubts can ever be fully debugged. Because as alleviating and reassuring as these reunions may be, your partner will eventually re-embark and

your robot will reactivate. Fully charged, you and your robot will begin again with the enthusiasm of new lovers—but soon will arrive the familiar degradation of effort, and just as the frigid eventuality of winter withers your silver maple, the same suspicions and doubts will return to choke your relationship. Should two people stay together if it's possible for them to have all of these doubts, you may wonder. Perhaps like the robots, our clients too may be irreversibly manipulated when they discover the flaws in their code. Our clients aren't so different from the robots, after all: simple encasements of parts and levers ushering electronic impulses from one apparatus to another, controlled by a command center only as faultless as its designer. Our data would surely suggest then that all of our long distance couples are fated for corruption, and that this false script of doubt caused by distance inevitably brings an acrimonious end.

But perhaps not! All of this is theoretical, of course. Whether or not our data proves causality is still open to interpretation. What we do know is that as long as potential clients continue to introduce distance into their relationships, we will continue to provide the technology that makes their loves' longevity possible. Just remember that if you and your partner are truly in love, and are willing to work, you should be fine. The robot is here to help! Are you ready to activate your robot? Trust the programming; trust your partner. You two are all you have in this long distance trial—well—you, your partner, and now the robot!