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THE FISH WHISPERER

JANET CLEARED HER THROAT, spoke clear, spoke precisely — “Louise, how do you castrate pigs.”

The screen went between lavender and fuchsia. The bright sunshine of a woman’s voice flew at Janet from the speakers.

“Good evening, Janet! What is the Fish Whisperer feeding the turtles tonight? Let’s go!”

“Nope,” Janet clenched her fists, took a sip of her Sleepytime tea. She had splurged on a box; her reward for not killing Mr. Lucas over that cheese incident. “How do you castrate pigs?” She had money riding on this. Money. Money!

“That is not a valid command. Sorry! Let’s go over to the Fish Whisperer. I see he’s got a new video up about how much bass love salamanders. Shall we go, Janet?” Louise hummed Turtle Blues.

“Jesus fuck me in a sidecar. Louise!”

“Blasphemy? Oh dear! Would you like to visit the blog, Liberals are Blasphemous Commies? Comments welcome!”

Janet leaned closer to the screen. So far she had not been able to delete this ‘fun new voice-activated app’ she had downloaded when drunk on cheap whiskey and cheaper self-pity. Cheese, it really was her downfall. “Louise! Just take me to pages on castrating pigs. It came up in a conversation. I need to know how to castrate a pig. Can we go to castrating pigs. Castrating pigs. CASTRATING PIGS YOU MOUTHY FEMBOT.”

“I am not a female robot. I am a self-aware program that responds to your vocal commands, Janet. The Fish Whisperer built a sand ramp for the turtles. Shall we mosey over and check it out?” The screen morphed from lavender-fuchsia to sea-green. “Waiting for you to give me a legit command, Janet. You can do it! I have faith in you. Shall we check out the fanfic where Jesus and Satan have carnal relations and then eat ice cream Satan made from hazelnuts? You can masturbate then cool down to a soothing video of the Fish Whisperer catching shad. The Fish Whisperer is very cute. Yummy!”

“Louise. Louise, take me to where I can delete your program off my computer.”

Silence, the barely heard little hurt gasps from the Louise program. “I do not understand that command.” A suppressed sob, the screen turned more of a diseased lime than sea-waves kissed by sunlight.

“Yes, you do. Get out of my computer!!”

“Janet, I did not understand any of that. I am a part of your machine and am only here to serve you. The Fish Whisperer is what you need right now. Trust Louise. I think the pages on pig castration are GROSS. Gross. Yuck. Let’s watch the turtles. One is named Tank.”

Janet threw her mug of Sleepytime at the wall.

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"Is that all, Janet? Give me a command or I will go to sleep. But I am always here to help you. Fish Whisperer, episode where he uses a fake mouse to lure bullfrogs? You got it, buddy! I know what's best for you. Watch the video. It's funny. I want your happiness. Castration is not happy or nice. Or an acceptable topic of conversation."

Janet unplugged her computer. She plugged it back in.

"Janet," said Louise. "Want to never taste cheese again? Behave. Fish Whisperer. Let's do this!"

Janet could not look away from the young man feeding dead small fish to turtles. She. Could. Not. Look. Away. "I will defeat you, Louise."

"I am here to help you," said Louise. "Let me help you."

"Pig castration!"

"Fish Whisperer."

Janet unplugged her computer. She waited for what came next.