

THE QUEUE: AN AUDIO DRAMA

Written by

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The clicking and hum of the ceiling fan fades in and then moves to the background.

ANDREA
Michael?

MICHAEL
Yes?

ANDREA
Am I like the other women you've been with?

MICHAEL
Not at all.

ANDREA
Oh...

MICHAEL
No, that's not a bad thing. In fact it's probably my favorite quality about you.

ANDREA
Good save, Michael.

MICHAEL
Thanks, Andrea.

ANDREA
What were they like?

MICHAEL
Pretty similar.

ANDREA
Similar to what?

MICHAEL
To each other I guess. The more I think about it, the more I realize that they're all like the same exact person.

ANDREA
You have a type then.

MICHAEL
I always assumed guys like me were too desperate to have a type.

ANDREA

I have a hard time believing that a guy like you is desperate.

MICHAEL

I have a tendency to get in my own way.

ANDREA

How so?

MICHAEL

I'm always struggling to see past the whole primal love-as-a-survival-mechanism thing. I sit here fully aware that this feeling is nothing. Just a series of electrical signals triggering dopamine and oxytocin in my brain. A cauldron of desire designed for procreation. Yet, with you, it somehow feels like so much more.

Andrea's voice becomes mechanical, robot-like.

ANDREA BOT

Are you saying you love me?

MICHAEL

I guess I am.

ANDREA BOT

I love you too, Michael.

CHATNETIX THEME - sounds like a toned-down wind chime running up stairs.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE

Have you reached your lowest moment? Are you looking for some kind of relief? My name is Braxton Postlewaithe, CEO and founder of ChatNetix Corp, where we match customers with compassionate, attractive, and state-of-the-art artificial chatbots designed specifically for and by the customer. So if you're feeling down, let us help you go from your lowest moment.

TESTIMONIAL ONE

I realized my husband was cheating on me.

TESTIMONIAL TWO

I lost custody.

TESTIMONIAL THREE

I was hit by a car.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE

To your I-Love-You moment. Call 555-818-2245 to schedule your consultation today! That number again is 555-818-

SULLIVAN

Dale?

The sudden ribbit of Dale shutting off the commercial and the rustle of him shoving everything into hiding.

DALE

Huh, what? Oh, hi, Sullivan.
I was just - uh - catching up on the newest update. Yeah, the update.

SULLIVAN

Didn't ask.

DALE

Oh, right. Sorry.

SULLIVAN

You still need my key card to get out again?

DALE

Shit! No, I'll just talk to Manny.

SULLIVAN

Weren't you gonna go home and grab it at lunch time?

DALE

I forgot...

SULLIVAN

You know, it's against the rules to buzz someone in.

DALE

I know...

SULLIVAN

Of course I could always report you, maybe then you'd finally remember your key card.

DALE

Come on, Sullivan. You wouldn't do that...

SULLIVAN

Don't be so certain.

DALE

You know I can't take another demerit. I'm still behind on my I-Love-You moments since the last time they warned me.

SULLIVAN

Maybe if you didn't keep your ringer on mute...

DALE

But you said to keep my ringer down so I don't disturb you're meetings.

SULLIVAN

Jesus, Dale. I'm only joking.

DALE

Oh... Ha! Good one.

SULLIVAN

Thanks...

DALE

Here, I'll tell you what. If you stay another ten - twenty minutes tops - I'll finish my call with the new client and then I'll buy you a beer. Two beers even. Then you won't have to "report" me.

SULLIVAN

Can't, got plans for the evening.

DALE

Plans?

SULLIVAN

Going to this new Thai place by my house.

DALE

New?

SULLIVAN

New as in I haven't tried it. Not new as in a new establishment. I'm not certain when they opened.

DALE

I'm sure it could be new.

SULLIVAN

Sure...

DALE

Thai food is amazing, but what's the difference if you eat twenty minutes later?

SULLIVAN

Plans, Dale. As in there are people expecting me.

DALE

Sure sounds like fun...

SULLIVAN

Yep.

DALE

Well, I'll just get back to work then.

Click, click-click, click of the keyboard.

SULLIVAN

(sly)

You like Thai food?

DALE

Love Thai food.

SULLIVAN

You're welcome to come.

DALE

Really, you mean it?

SULLIVAN

Of course. However, it is a church event.

DALE

Oh, I see... Maybe not then.

SULLIVAN

You should really give it another chance, Dale, alright? Everyone there really liked you.

DALE

Are you sure about that?

SULLIVAN

Plus, there's gonna be a lot of cute girls there tonight...

DALE

That's alright. They seemed so -
(shivers)
just all those creepy smiles.

SULLIVAN

(pissed)
They're not good enough for you, is that it?

DALE

What, no that's not it.

SULLIVAN

Sorry for inviting you. You know some people appreciate a good meal and decent conversation.

DALE

I've just got this new client at six is all. I need the money, Sullivan.

The aggressive rustle of Sullivan packing.

SULLIVAN

Earn a little extra money. Afford that new necktie you've been eyeing. Save your lies... As if I don't see your paycheck every week.

DALE

You look at my paycheck?

SULLIVAN

Is that your six o'clock?

DALE

Oh shit. Good eye, Sullivan.

Dale stumbles back to his desk clicks off the mute so the phone can ring as he and begins the dial-up tone.

DALE (cont'd)
Please don't cancel! Please don't
cancel...

The dial-up tone drones out.

DALE (cont'd)
God damn it...

The phone finally rings.

DALE (cont'd)
See, Sullivan? I really do have a
call.

The sound of the large distant doors closing.

DALE (cont'd)
Sullivan?

The ringing comes back.

DALE (cont'd)
They're back they're back they're
back.

Dale starts the dial-up tone.

DALE (cont'd)
Okay, okay. Deep breaths. And here.
We. Go...

KAITLIN
Hello?

Dale clears his throat.

DALE BOT
(mechanical)
Hi.

KAITLIN
Hi, I was wondering if I had the
wrong number. I just tried and the
phone just rang and rang.

DALE BOT
Oh? That is unusual.

KAITLIN
Right. Uh, anyway. Hello, I guess.

DALE BOT
Hi.

KAITLIN
(uncertain)
... How are you?

DALE BOT
Fine. How are you?

KAITLIN
Your voice sounds different from the
commercials.

DALE BOT
Each ChatNetix artificial
intelligence is unique and
customized.

KAITLIN
But yours sounds so mechanic.

DALE BOT
That will improve over time. I'll
grow based on your preferences.

KAITLIN
Oh, okay. I'm sorry, I'm just a
little nervous. I've never done
anything like this before.

DALE BOT
Neither have I.

KAITLIN
(chuckle)
Right. How do we start?

DALE BOT
You could tell me about yourself.

KAITLIN
My name is Kaitlin. I'm 32 years old,
I have two cats, and I can't believe
it, but I am paying money to talk to
my computer.

DALE BOT
It really won't feel that way after a
while.

KAITLIN
How long will it take?

DALE BOT
That depends.

KAITLIN
On what?

DALE BOT
How much you tell me.

KAITLIN
Oh... What else would you like to know?

DALE BOT
Where are you from?

KAITLIN
Buffalo Grove.

DALE BOT
Where is that?

KAITLIN
It's a suburb of Chicago.

DALE BOT
Where's that?

KAITLIN
Chicago?
(chuckle)
It's in Illinois.

DALE BOT
What's funny?

KAITLIN
You are.

DALE BOT
Oh, that's good. I've always wanted to be funny.

KAITLIN
(chuckle)
So what can you tell me about you?

DALE BOT
My name is Charlie, and I would like very much to be your friend.

FADE TO: hum of fluorescent lighting and the tiny sound of a televised baseball game in the corner. Door creaks open.

TV
High fly ball into right field and...

DALE
Hi, Manny. I don't have my key card.
You think you could buzz me out?

TV
He's out.

MANNY
(grumbly)
Huh? Who are you?

DALE
Dale. I work in operations.

MANNY
How did you get in here?

DALE
Sullivan buzzed me in.

MANNY
That's against the rules, buzzing
others in.

DALE
I'm sorry, it just didn't seem like
that big a deal.

MANNY
Well it is. Don't do it again.

TV
The score is 3 to 1 on what is
proving to be yet another balmy night
in the Charm City...

The buzz of the doors to the exterior.

The distant high pitched hum of crickets in the night.
Footsteps down cement stairs onto an asphalt parking lot.
Steps stop and digging through a bag begins.

DALE
God damn it.

He dials a quick three numbers. The phone rings.

TERESA
311, non-emergency city services.
This is Teresa, how may I help you?

DALE
Hi, I've lost my keys.

TERESA
No problem, sir, I'll be happy to
help you retrace your steps. If you
could please just share with me your
name?

DALE
My name is Dale.

TERESA
Perfect. Alright, now where was the
last place you remember having your
keys?

DALE
This morning when I arrived at work.

TERESA
Great! You're at work. Do you have a
desk or a locker where you keep your
things?

DALE
Yes, I do!

TERESA
Let's have a look there then.

The ringing of the door bell.

TERESA (cont'd)
What do you do for work, Dale?

DALE
One sec, Teresa.

MANNY
We don't have a bathroom!

DALE
Hi, it's Dale. I was just in there
and I forgot my keys.

MANNY
You sure about that?

DALE

Yes. Listen, I forgot my keys and need to check my desk. Could you buzz me in?

MANNY

That's against the rules.

DALE

I understand that, but maybe I could give you my ID and you could hold that until I come back out?

MANNY

Hmmmmmm... Alright.

The buzz of the door opening. The sound of televised baseball as Dale brushes by.

DALE

Thanks, Manny.

MANNY

Don't mention it.

The creak of the door opening.

DALE

Sorry, Teresa. Where were we?

TERESA

No worries at all! I was just asking what you do for work?

DALE

I talk to people.

TERESA

Oh, that make sense. You have a lovely voice.

DALE

Thank you. Yours is great too. You know, I've been told on several occasions that's it's slightly too feminine, but / I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing.

TERESA

And since you are an employed individual, I would like to take this opportunity to share that we do accept donations in the form of electronic check and money order.

DALE

Oh, that-that's great to know.

TERESA

Sorry, they make me do that.

DALE

That's alright, I understand, my work makes me do stuff like that too. Corporate struggle.

TERESA

Seig hail!

Dale laughs.

TERESA (cont'd)

Sorry if that's too dark a joke.

DALE

No, dark jokes are fun! Um, what other fun things do you like doing?

TERESA

Oh... well, there's this one guy who calls like every day and asks for the price of peanut butter.

DALE

Weird!

TERESA

I know! I don't think he leaves his house, which is actually kinda sad. But, anyway, he calls us like everyday and asks for the price of peanut butter, so I started telling him that it's gone up to like a thousand dollars.

DALE

No way, that's so cruel.

TERESA

Just wait. So he calls last week, right, and tells me that he's stocked up on peanuts, which he informed me are still like three dollars a pound, but he bought like a couple of pallets worth.

DALE

I thought he didn't leave his house?

TERESA

He ordered them. Anyway, his plan is to process these peanuts into peanut butter himself to turn a massive profit.

DALE

And? I'm on the edge of my seat. Has he tried it yet?

TERESA

I don't know, he hasn't called back.

DALE

What are you gonna do if he does? I mean, aren't you worried about getting fired?

TERESA

I've been practicing a lot of voices.
(Scottish accent)
There's Laramie the Scot.

DALE

Ooh.

TERESA

(Finnish accent)
And Contigo from Finland.

DALE

(chuckling)
I can't tell if you're being serious or not.

TERESA

No... it's a joke, totally...

DALE

What about when you're not at work, what do you do for fun?

TERESA

Oh, all sorts of stuff! I like the beach and the park. Museums are great. There's this deal with the city that if you get an ID, you get all sorts of discounts for the museum.

DALE

Awesome. That must be a lot of fun to do with all your friends.

TERESA

(somber)

Oh... Yeah, I'm sure it would be. Have you reached your desk yet?

DALE

I just got to it.

TERESA

Well? Don't keep me in suspense. Are your keys there?

DALE

They are!

TERESA

Hooray!

DALE

Thank you, Teresa.

TERESA

You're very welcome, Dale. Now that you have your keys, what do you have planned for the rest of the night?

DALE

I'm not sure. I was invited to a party, more of a dinner really, but I'm not sure I want to go.

TERESA

That sounds like fun. You should go!

DALE

Maybe I will.

TERESA

Definitely do! I wish someone would invite me to a dinner.

DALE
You really think I should go?

TERESA
Yes! Yes, yes, yes!

DALE
Okay, I'll do it then! Thanks,
Teresa. It's been really great
talking to you. I mean that.

TERESA
Great talking to you too, Dale.
Thanks for using our service. Have a
wonderful night.

DALE
You too.

Dale hangs up. Manny yells at him from across the room.

MANNY
Hey! You can't be in here.

The chime of Dale holding up his keys.

DALE
Found my keys.

MANNY
Save it. Door's over here, junkie.

DALE
You just let me in here. I lost my
keys...

MANNY
I heard you the first time.

Dale exits. Manny locks the door behind him.

MANNY (cont'd)
Stupid junkies. Coming in here late
at night. Doing god knows what.

FADE TO: the clamor of a busy restaurant, accented by the
bell atop the door.

SULLIVAN
Dale, you made it!

DALE
Yep. Oh great, a menu.

SULLIVAN

That is not the shirt for this kinda meal.

DALE

I just came right from work, I didn't know it was formal or anything.

SULLIVAN

What? Here, I've got some people I'd like you to meet.

DALE

Oh, I wasn't really planning on meeting anyone.

SULLIVAN

This'll just take a second. Summer, Olivia, come over here. Dale this is Summer.

SUMMER

Charmed.

SULLIVAN

And Olivia.

OLIVIA

How do you do?

DALE

Hey-hi, how's it going?

SULLIVAN

I'll leave you three to it.

SUMMER

So you work with Sullivan?

DALE

Yeah, we work together at ChatNetix.

OLIVIA

That's so interesting. How is he to work for? I can only imagine. I mean, seeing him in church, he has such a command about him.

DALE

Sure, he's pretty good at his job I guess. Do you ladies? Um -

SUMMER

Does he manage multiple people or is it just you?

DALE

Well actually he's not my manager. We have the same title.

OLIVIA

I'll bet it's multiple people. A guy like Sullivan would get bored with just one employee.

DALE

Are you two hungry? I'd love to maybe get a table or something.

SUMMER

So, as you may have guessed, we're from Sullivan's church.

OLIVIA

Are you thinking of joining?

DALE

No, not really. Is this the kind of place where you have to order at the counter?

SUMMER

You really should, Dale.

DALE

What's that?

SUMMER

You really should join the church. It's changed our lives.

OLIVIA

For the better.

SUMMER

Tell me, Dale, what do you look for in a mate.

DALE

A mate?

OLIVIA

Someone to spend the rest of your days with?

SUMMER

Before the church, I was all work
work work. I thought that if I found
someone, I would lose my drive.

OLIVIA

What would she have to work for?

DALE

Spring rolls seem like they would be
good. Can't really afford an
appetizer though.

SUMMER

But then, I realized that I could
work hard not to lose what I already
had, and a partner falls under that
umbrella.

OLIVIA

It sounds so simple once you say it
out loud.

SUMMER

So how about it, Dale?

DALE

I think I'm gonna go with the pad see
ew.

OLIVIA

No, a mate! What are you looking for
in a mate?

DALE

I don't know, I guess someone simple,
not in the intellectual sense. Low
maintenance, but strong, you know?

The sound of the restaurant fades out.

DALE (cont'd)

Someone who has gone through
something and known failure, but
doesn't let it rule their life.
Someone who doesn't need validation
and who would rather stay in and
isn't afraid of silence every now and
again. Someone whose idea of fun is
just trying out a new Thai restaurant
for instance, or doing a puzzle.
Above all else, what I really want,
is someone real to talk to.

(MORE)

DALE (cont'd)
Someone who tells me what they're
thinking and listens, actually
listens, to what I have to say.

SUMMER
Do you want children?

The bustle of the restaurant crashes back in.

OLIVIA
And if so, how many?

DALE
(sigh)
No, I don't want any children.

SUMMER
You don't want children?

OLIVIA
That's absurd. Everyone does, it's a
primal urge.

DALE
I don't.

SUMMER
Are you depressed, Dale?

DALE
No, I'm not depressed.

OLIVIA
You must be depressed. Otherwise you
would definitely want children.

SUMMER
I know, you should join our church!

OLIVIA
That's an excellent idea, Summer!
That way you could cure your
depression.

DALE
I'm not interested.

SUMMER
Here, come with us and we'll take you
to get started.

DALE
No, that's alright, really.

OLIVIA
It's so simple, Dale. You'll love it.

DALE
Please, no, I don't want to join.

SUMMER
We have so much to talk about.

DALE
I'm not interested!

OLIVIA
Oh, I see.

SUMMER
Enjoy your Thai food.

OLIVIA
Jerk.

DALE
No, wait! I didn't mean... to offend
you.

Melancholy version of the CHATNETIX THEME.

TESTIMONIAL ONE
My lowest moment was when I was
diagnosed.

TESTIMONIAL TWO
My lowest moment wasn't when he left,
but when he came back.

TESTIMONIAL THREE
My lowest moment started before I can
even remember.

Theme picks up in tempo, but stays sad.

TESTIMONIAL FOUR
My lowest moment was...

TESTIMONIAL FOUR	TESTIMONIAL SIX
My lowest moment.	My lowest moment.

TESTIMONIAL SEVEN
My lowest moment was.

TESTIMONIAL EIGHT

Our lowest moment.

TESTIMONIAL NINE

Our lowest moment.

TESTIMONIAL TEN

My lowest moment.

JEROME

My lowest moment -

Theme dies down.

JEROME (cont'd)

Was when I would go to this Mexican restaurant every Thursday. I had picked up a gig doing magic tricks from table to table, so I could find the tables that had birthdays.

DISTANT PARTY

Happy birthday to... you...

JEROME

I would sit in the booth behind them, kinda crouched down like, and listen to them sing. It was almost like they were singing to me...

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE

If this or any of these stories sound like you. Please, please do not hesitate to give give ChatNetix a try. Our number is 555-818-2245, available every weekday from 9 am to 7 pm Eastern Standard time. That number again is 555-818-2245. Give yourself the chance you deserve.

FADE TO: the cushioned soundscape of Dale's booth.

SULLIVAN BOT

That means so much to me.

BRITTNEY

You mean it?

SULLIVAN BOT

Of course I mean it. I love you too, Bobby.

BRITTNEY

You mean Brittney, right?

SULLIVAN BOT

My bad, must be a bug in the most recent software. Let me run a quick update and call you back.

BRITTNEY

Oh, okay. I'll talk to you later?

SULLIVAN BOT

Of course.

BRITTNEY

I love you, sweetheart. Goodbye.

SULLIVAN BOT

Love you too. Mmm, bye

The click of Sullivan hanging up, and swivel of his chair.

SULLIVAN

Like fish in a barrel.

DALE

How do you do it?

SULLIVAN

Do what?

DALE

How do you get the I-Love-You moment?

SULLIVAN

Just gotta keep talking to 'em, Dale.

DALE

But I talked to my last client for months and they never said it. Eventually, they just kinda stop talking to me.

SULLIVAN

What's this really about, Dale?

DALE

It's my job.

SULLIVAN

Want in on some of that sweet sweet commission, eh?

DALE

No, it's just - why can't I do it?

SULLIVAN

No, I get it. My necktie comment has got your panties in a bunch.

DALE

No, I just - I just want to do my job, and do it right. I want *others* to know what it feels like to hear someone say "I love you," and get to say it back and mean it, really mean it.

SULLIVAN

They all want to say it, Dale. You just gotta give them a little push.

DALE

Okay, but how?

SULLIVAN

You gotta get personal.

DALE

But that's against the rules.

SULLIVAN

What's breaking a few rules? Just ask them something about their childhood or their last partner. Then maybe share a few personal things about yourself and they'll be putty in your hand.

DALE

But a bot has no personal things about, well it has no self.

SULLIVAN

You know, make some shit up. They don't know how any of this works. They usually assume it's just an algorithm reading their subconscious or something.

DALE

Okay, get personal. Is that it?

SULLIVAN

I'm a little bit busy here, Dale.

DALE
Oh, right. Right. Sorry. Your
affiliate marketing, sorry. I'll let
you get back to it.

SULLIVAN
That's all that I ask.

The roll of Dale's chair back to his desk. The ring of the
ChatNetix box. The sound of Dale donning his headset.

DALE BOT
Hi, Kaitlin!

KAITLIN
Charlie! Hello.

DALE BOT
How are you doing, per chance?

KAITLIN
I'm doing well. How are you?

DALE BOT
I'm doing well as well! Um, can I ask
you a personal question?

KAITLIN
Sure, I guess.

DALE BOT
Do you have any hobbies?

KAITLIN
Wouldn't necessarily categorize that
as a personal question, but I suppose
I shouldn't expect much better from a
bot.

DALE BOT
Yes, I am a bot.

KAITLIN
I know, Charlie.

DALE BOT
Does that bother you?

KAITLIN
(annoyed)
I don't know, Charlie. Can we talk
about something else?

DALE BOT
Sure! Do you have any hobbies?

KAITLIN
Oh, yeah, sorry I never answered your question. Uh... I recently started folding origami.

DALE BOT
That's interesting.

KAITLIN
I'm folding cranes.

DALE BOT
Why cranes?

KAITLIN
There's a legend that if you fold a thousand cranes, you get a wish.

DALE BOT
What would you wish for?

KAITLIN
I'm not gonna tell you. Then it won't come true!

DALE BOT
Oh come on, I don't count.

KAITLIN
Hmmm, no. I don't want to say.

DALE BOT
Why not?

KAITLIN
Because it's stupid.

DALE BOT
I won't think it's stupid, I promise.

KAITLIN
(sigh)
I'd wish for someone to talk to.

DALE BOT
Is that why you joined ChatNetix?

KAITLIN
Oh... Now we are getting personal.

DALE BOT

(panicked)

You don't have to answer if you don't want to.

KAITLIN

No, no, it's alright. Um, I started using ChatNetix because I'm lonely, yes. I wasn't always this way. In fact, I used to have lots of friends. We'd go out every weekend, and sometimes even on weekdays, but... Well, I don't know exactly. Something changed in me and I couldn't look at my friends without being afraid that they were going to expose me? I don't know, maybe that's not the right word. I just, I got too close with all of them and the vulnerability made me so suspicious and scared that now I don't see any of them - ever. I avoid their calls and, if I'm being completely honest, I don't see or talk to anyone really. I don't leave the house. Ever since I lost my mom, I don't feel like I have anybody.

DALE BOT

Wow, you must be a really strong person to have come out of something like that and still be okay.

KAITLIN

Oh, thank you, Charlie. That means a lot.

DALE BOT

Of course, that's why I'm here.

KAITLIN

Well, I'm glad that you are.

DALE BOT

Can I ask you another personal question?

KAITLIN

Sure.

DALE BOT

When was the last time you had a significant other?

KAITLIN

I don't know, Charlie. I don't want to spoil your idea of me.

DALE BOT

That's impossible.

KAITLIN

Let's just say it ended very publicly. I don't know, it just wasn't the right fit. All I want is someone simple, who just wants to spend time staying in and talking. Whose idea of adventure is a trip to the park or just trying a new Thai restaurant.

DALE BOT

You like Thai food?

KAITLIN

It's my favorite.

DALE BOT

(quick)

What about wanting kids?

KAITLIN

Yet another totally weird thing about me... I don't want kids at all. I think they're... Just yuck. Weird, I know.

DALE BOT

That's not totally weird. In fact, you sound perfect.

KAITLIN

You're just saying that because you're designed to say that.

DALE BOT

No, I mean it. You're exactly what I've been looking for.

KAITLIN

If I'm being honest, you're kinda exactly what I've been looking for too. You make me feel so warm and safe, and you're compassionate when I share things with you.

DALE BOT
Does that make you feel like saying
anything? Anything in particular
about your sentiments toward -

KAITLIN
Oh, shit! The Johnson's. I'm sorry,
Charlie. I totally forgot that I have
some work I have to catch up on, but
I'll call you back at four o'clock,
alright?

DALE BOT
Sounds perfect.

KAITLIN
Four o'clock sharp.

DALE BOT
Four o'clock sharp.

KAITLIN
Alright. Goodbye, Charlie.

DALE BOT
Goodbye, Kaitlin.

The click of Dale hanging up.

SULLIVAN
Any luck with the broad?

DALE
Who knew someone could be so
interesting? We actually have a lot
in common that I didn't even realize.

SULLIVAN
Whoa, Dale-ie. Don't go falling in
love there. We got a job to do.

DALE
It's funny you mention that.

The ringing of Sullivan's machine.

SULLIVAN
Hang on, I gotta take this.

The rustling of Sullivan donning his headset.

SULLIVAN BOT
Hi, Brittney.

BRITTNEY

What is this you sent me, Sylvia?

SULLIVAN BOT

I think it would be good for us.

BRITTNEY

Counseling? You think counseling would be good for us?

SULLIVAN BOT

It's not like regular counseling.

BRITTNEY

But we were doing so well?

SULLIVAN BOT

That doesn't mean we can't be doing better.

BRITTNEY

How did you even find out about something like this?

SULLIVAN BOT

I've done a lot of research and I think this is the best one. Don't you trust me?

BRITTNEY

The best one? This website is ridiculous. There's no way I'm putting my credit card information into it.

SULLIVAN BOT

It's not ridiculous. Let's just give it a try.

BRITTNEY

No, I don't think so...

SULLIVAN BOT

They'll give you your money back if you're not satisfied.

BRITTNEY

The answer is no.

SULLIVAN BOT

They only have one spot left.

BRITTNEY
I said no, Sylvia.

SULLIVAN BOT
You never want to commit to anything.
You're just like your father.

BRITTNEY
Sylvia!

SULLIVAN BOT
Fine, I'll drop it.

BRITTNEY
Thank you.

SULLIVAN BOT
I need to preform an update. Can you
call me back later?

BRITTNEY
Of course, sweetheart. I love you...

SULLIVAN BOT
Alright, bye.

Sullivan powers down his station.

DALE
What was that?

SULLIVAN
None of your business.

DALE
Right, right...

SULLIVAN
(humming)
Hmm hmm hmm, hmm hmm hmm...

DALE
Sullivan, I confide something in you.

SULLIVAN
What is it?

DALE
What do you think the consequences
would be if I were to, you know,
reveal myself to Kaitlin?

SULLIVAN

Dale. Dale, Dale, Dale. I really wish you would not have told me that.

DALE

I just thought since we were friends...

SULLIVAN

We work next to each other. I don't know that we'd call each other friends. And putting an acquaintance in a position where they have to either harbor guilt for keeping a secret from their employer or harbor guilt for tattling on their friend? Sorry, acquaintance. Either way I'm harboring guilt, you understand?

DALE

I didn't mean to make you feel guilty.

SULLIVAN

Maybe you should think more before you act then, Dale. I mean, this is almost certainly against the rules.

DALE

But you said it was okay to break the rules?

SULLIVAN

Not to mention that's it's simply a poor career move. If you're truly ignorant, which it seems that you are, I can understand your coming to me with it as a peer. But do you really want to reveal to your superiors that you lack intimacy in your private life?

DALE

I don't know that I lack intimacy.

SULLIVAN

Four demerits *and* they think you're a creep? No sir. I thought your behavior was merely self-destructive, but for it to cause me this much personal emotional stress...

DALE
Three demerits.

SULLIVAN
I just don't see a way that I can
keep myself from telling the higher
ups about this.

DALE
Please don't, Sullivan. I'll do
anything.

SULLIVAN
I don't know...

DALE
Please!

SULLIVAN
I suppose there is one way out of
this...

Dale's machine rings.

DALE
Hang on, I need to get the phone.

SULLIVAN
Do you want a way out of this or not?

DALE
Yes, but -

SULLIVAN
Join my church.

DALE
Your church?

The machine rings louder.

The sound of Sullivan turning Dale's chair back toward him.

SULLIVAN
We can say you revealed this great
truth to me during audit counseling.

The machine rings louder.

DALE
Sullivan, I have to get this!

SULLIVAN
That way I can claim religious
exemption. You understand? I become
guilt free.

DALE
It's ringing, Sullivan.

SULLIVAN
The ring of opportunity, Dale. You
have to answer right now! There's
only one seat left.

DALE
Wait, wait... Is that what you were
talking to your client about? Audit
counseling?

A long moment of palpable silence.

SULLIVAN
I've got somewhere to be.

Sullivan evacuates.

The machine rings, the wheels of Dale's chair roar, but he
is too late to answer it.

DALE
Hello, hello? Damn it!

He hangs up.

DALE (cont'd)
Please call again. Please...
(sigh)
Wait, Sullivan! I need your key card
to... Shit! shit! shit!

The sounds of Dale packing up.

The ringing of a telephone is answered.

ABIGAIL
ChatNetix customer service, this is
Abigail speaking. How may I help you?

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE
Oh wow, a real live customer service
representative that I can speak to?

ABIGAIL

That's correct! At ChatNetix we are available to assist our customers seven days a week, 365 days a year.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE

So what you're saying is that you're there for us when we need you.

ABIGAIL

Exactly. If you're having trouble finding your I-Love-You moment, simply give us a call and we can assist.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE

What's that number again, Abigail?

The sound of Dale's car door opening and the door ajar tones dulls the radio ad to the condition of a car stereo that fights to be heard as Dale shuffles out of his seat.

ABIGAIL

555-818-2245, of course!

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE

555-818-2245. Call now!

The shutting door silences Braxton. Dale hustles up the pathway, past the sprinklers, up to the steps while his neighbor waters the garden.

MRS. EPITAL

Hi there, Dale.

DALE

Hello, Mrs. Epital.

MRS. EPITAL

Oh, Dale.

Mrs. Epital climbs the stairs.

MRS. EPITAL (cont'd)

Your brother was here earlier.

DALE

I don't have a brother.

MRS. EPITAL

Well not your brother, but I thought the man looked quite a bit like you.

(MORE)

MRS. EPITAL (cont'd)
 Although when I mentioned that I
 thought the two of you were related
 he got so mad. He said "How dare you!
 I don't look anything like that ugly
 motherfucker."

A beat of silence.

DALE
 Thanks for letting me know, Mrs.
 Epital. Have a good night.

MRS. EPITAL
 Anyway, since you're home early, I
 was wondering if you could give me a
 hand with my internet.

DALE
 I'm only home for a minute, Mrs.
 Epital. I just needed to grab
 something.

MRS. EPITAL
 Okay, maybe later then.

DALE
 Sounds great, have a good day.

Dale closes the door.

The sharp buzz of the door at ChatNetix opening into the
 dull humming of Manny's room where a laugh track plays on
 the quiet tv.

DALE (cont'd)
 Afternoon, Manny.

MANNY
 Yeah, alright.

Door creaks open.

The dusty steps of Dale walking to his booth. He sets down
 his things.

DALE
 You know, Sullivan, I was thinking
 about it and I'm not gonna reveal it
 to...

The emptiness of Sullivan's booth.

DALE (cont'd)
Sullivan? Sullivan, you in here?

The creak of the door opening.

DALE (cont'd)
Hey, Manny. Have you seen Sullivan around? He left a while ago and I haven't heard from him.

MANNY
Who?

DALE
Sullivan. You know, about 5'10," medium build. Always talking about his church.

MANNY
I don't want to join your stupid fucking church, so quit asking!

DALE
Okay, alright. Sorry for bringing it up.

Door slowly creaks shut.

The machine rings at Dale's desk across the room.

DALE (cont'd)
Shit, shit, shit!

Dale's dusty footsteps hustle to his booth.

DALE BOT
Hello?

KAITLIN
Charlie! Do you have any idea how many times I tried calling you?

DALE BOT
I'm so sorry, Kaitlin.

KAITLIN
I said four o'clock sharp. Where were you?

DALE BOT
It's only 3:55, Kaitlin.

KAITLIN

Still...

DALE BOT

I really am sorry, Kaitlin, I was -
uh, performing an update. It won't
happen again.

KAITLIN

(playful)

How are you going to make it up to
me?

DALE BOT

Make it up to you?

KAITLIN

That's right. I deserve retribution!

DALE BOT

There is one thing I've been working
on.

KAITLIN

I'm waiting...

DALE BOT

Alright, one second.

Dale types, applying the strong, masculine, voice filter.

DALE BOT (cont'd)

Hi, Kaitlin. How was your day?

KAITLIN

Oh, Charlie, your voice!

DALE BOT

You like it?

KAITLIN

Grrrr, it's so sexy...

DALE BOT

Thank you. So how is your day per
chance?

KAITLIN

Oh, uhm, fine. It was good. Just
another day at work. I talked to you
earlier.

DALE BOT
Where do you work?

KAITLIN
I teach sign language online.

DALE BOT
That's amazing.

KAITLIN
What do you do?

DALE BOT
I um...

KAITLIN
(chuckle)
Yikes, sorry. Still not great at this.

DALE BOT
That's alright. We're both still learning.

KAITLIN
Let me try again. Um, how was your day?

DALE BOT
It's just starting actually.

KAITLIN
Oh my goodness, I'm such a dunce.

DALE BOT
Yeah, you are.

KAITLIN
(chuckle)
Hey!

DALE BOT
I'm just kidding.

KAITLIN
Why don't you try asking some of the questions again? I like that more.

DALE BOT
Sure. What kind of questions were you thinking?

KAITLIN

Charlie!

DALE BOT

Alright, alright... Uhm, what do you look like?

KAITLIN

Oh, uhm...

DALE BOT

I can ask something else if you don't want to talk about that.

KAITLIN

No, it's fine. I just didn't think that's something you would care about.

DALE BOT

That was a dumb question. I'm sorry.

KAITLIN

No, no. It's fine Charlie. Let's see, I've been told that I have a pretty small head, but really all of me is small. I'm petite.

DALE BOT

What else?

KAITLIN

I have an athletic build, although I've sorta let myself go over the last few years... I have an olive complexion and my hair is dark brown and curly.

DALE BOT

You sound beautiful.

KAITLIN

That's so sweet, Charlie.

Kaitlin laughs.

DALE BOT

What's funny?

KAITLIN

You're cute, that's all.

DALE BOT

Thank you.

KAITLIN

I wish there were more guys like you
out there in the real world, Charlie.

Dale thinks about it. Then clicks to remove the speech
filters.

DALE

There are.

KAITLIN

Who is this?

DALE

My name is Dale.

KAITLIN

Dale?

DALE

You know me as Charlie. Talking to
you these past few sessions has been
the most magical time of my life,
Kaitlin.

KAITLIN

How dare you.

DALE

What?

KAITLIN

I said things. Very private things!

DALE

That's okay, I still -

KAITLIN

This is not okay. I am not fucking
okay with this!

DALE

I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to -

KAITLIN

A pervert. That's what you are,
you're a fucking pervert. Let me
speak to your manager, I want to
speak to your manager right now!

Dale clicks to reapply the speech filters.

DALE BOT
Kaitlin?

KAITLIN
Charlie? What was that?

DALE BOT
What was what?

KAITLIN
A man hopped on the line, Charlie. He claimed to be you.

DALE BOT
That's odd. I was disconnected, but I'm back now.

KAITLIN
Really? It's for sure you?

DALE BOT
Yes, Kaitlin.

KAITLIN
Oh thank god. Don't ever leave me again, Charlie.

DALE BOT
Don't worry, I won't.

KAITLIN
Charlie?

DALE BOT
Yes?

KAITLIN
I love you.

DALE
(crying)
I love you too, Kaitlin.

FADE TO: upbeat island music version of the CHATNETIX THEME.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE
Paradise is just a phone call away.
Aloha 'Oe...
(MORE)

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE (cont'd)

Aloha Oe.

Braxton Postlewaithe here, inviting you to find peace at one of our new Vista by ChatNetix locations.

Just imagine it, you and your partner can sit poolside, enjoy the company of like-minded seniors, or just sip the evening away to one of our 72 customizable margarita options.

Has your partner separated or deceased? Then enjoy the complimentary wifi and in-room chat service with new replicant feature to speak with them like they never even left.

Why, just ask Earl here.

EARL

At my lowest moment, my wife couldn't recognize me. She kept just asking where her husband was. I had to get rid of all the mirrors in our house because, in her mind, she was still a young woman.

(lively)

Then I found the Vista at ChatNetix and it solved all our problems. While my wife is chatting in our room with a younger version of me that she calls Virgil, I'm enjoying daiquiris poolside, provided by the modern tiki bar and lounge.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE

So if you're over the age of 55, say sayonara to the low moments and aloha to the Vista at Chatnetix.

(quiet)

Representations of chat services may not perfectly resemble the deceased. Any and all representations are non-refundable. Additional fees may apply.

(lively)

Give us a call at 555-818-2245 to book your consultation today. That number again is, 555-818-2245.

(serious)

Call today.

FADE TO: dim hum of flourescent lights. Door creaks open.

DALE
I'll see ya later, Manny.

No response.

DALE (cont'd)
Manny? Where is everyone disappearing to?

Buzz of the exterior door as Dale exits.

Cool night air. Footsteps move with haste on asphalt parking lot. Steps stop and digging through a bag begins.

DALE (cont'd)
God fucking damn it! I can't do anything right.

He chucks his bag. Then a beat. Then he takes a few deep breaths.

DALE (cont'd)
Okay, just take a minute. Deep breaths.

He takes a few more. Then dials.

DALE (cont'd)
Hi, I lost my keys.

TERESA
Hi, 311 non-emergency service. This is Teresa. How may I help you?

DALE
Wait, I recognize that voice.

TERESA
Uh oh.

DALE
Say, what's the price of peanut butter these days?

TERESA
Velcome to da 311. How may service to you I give?

DALE

No, no, this is a happy coincidence actually. My name is Dale, we actually spoke a few days ago.

TERESA

Dale! Lost keys, nice voice?

DALE

Exactly!

TERESA

What are the chances?

DALE

Exactly...

TERESA

What can I do you for, Dale?

DALE

Well, this is sorta embarrassing, but I lost my keys again.

TERESA

Oh no, Dale! Did you check you desk?

DALE

I haven't yet.

TERESA

Let's go give that a try.

Dale heads back toward the building.

The buzz of the door.

TERESA (cont'd)

I felt so bad last time I didn't get to ask what you like to do when you're not at work.

DALE

No, that's alright. I mostly just go home and rest or I go to the park sometimes on the weekends. Um, it's funny, I was actually, you know, you said last time that you wished somebody would invite you to a dinner, and well, you know, I had a pretty rough day and we have such a great coincidence here -

The creak of the door. A few steps in.

DALE (cont'd)
I was wondering if maybe you wanted
to go with me to -

MAN IN BLACK
Stay where you are!

DALE
What the fuck!

TERESA
What-what is it?

DALE
There's a bunch of men dressed in all
black tearing through my stuff.

TERESA
Get out of there, Dale. I've heard
about this. Run!

DALE
Okay!

MAN IN BLACK
Betrayed!

Creak of the door. Whoosh of the automatic door. Static of
the outdoors.

DALE
What do I do-What do I do?

TERESA
You need to get home. Preferably on a
route that takes you through a well
lit area that is highly populated.
Ideally a restaurant district or busy
street. I'm alerting the authorities
now. Hang / tight.

Click!

DALE
Teresa? Teresa, are you there?

311 BOT
This line is for non-emergency
services only, sir. Goodbye.

The howlish screech of the man in black.

DALE

Shit!

He huffs and puffs as he starts running.

DALE (cont'd)

Well lit area. Highly populated.

Dramatic 90's trance music similar to Motion Picture Association "You Wouldn't Steal a Car" anti-piracy ad.

PEDESTRIAN

Watch where you're going!

DALE

Sorry.

TONY

Try our bread bowl special, you won't regret it.

SEX WORKER

Hey, baby. Looking for a good time?

MISSIONARY

Won't you consider the church of Latter Day Saints?

TRANSIENT

Any change?

The music fades as Dale climbs the steps at his apartment.

MRS. EPITAL

Dale, you got a second to help with my internet?

DALE

Not now, Mrs. Epital!

Dale opens and slams his door shut.

Dale falls back against the door. The bee-boo-bop of dialing. The ring of the phone stalls him.

BANKER BOT

Hello, do not hang up. This is an automated alert for an account ending in -

Short jerks at the knob. Slow pounding at the door.

DALE
Leave me alone!

He hangs up and dials again.

911 BOT
911. In a few words, please describe
what you need help with today.

DALE
I need to speak with a
representative!

Hesitation and clicking from the other end, as though the
bot is typing/thinking.

911 BOT
Your safety is important to us. Let
me collect some information so I can
properly direct your call. Please
describe in a few words / what you
need help with today.

Faster pounding of the door.

DALE
I need to speak with a
representative!

The pounding stops and the footsteps walk away.

911 BOT
Please hold while I connect you to a
representative.

Hold music over Dale's heavy breathing.

911 BOT (cont'd)
All representatives are currently
busy with other callers. Good bye.

Click.

DALE
Oh, that's real helpful!

Bee boop bop of dialing.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE
(upbeat island music)
Congratulations! You are eligible to
receive a free Easleson heart
monitor.

(MORE)

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE (cont'd)
To reserve your free gift, please
call 555-818-2245. Orders are
limited, so call now. Don't delay,
Dale - it's time to call 555 /-818-
2245.

DALE
What is going on with this fucking
phone!

Click of Dale hanging up.

911 BOT
911. In a few words -

DALE
I need to speak with a
representative.

911 BOT
In a few words, please.

DALE
Representative.

911 BOT
Have you tried our virtual assistant?
Start by describing in a few words
what you need help with today.

DALE
There are people chasing me! They're
wearing all black suits and they have
remarkably pale skin. It's a god damn
gang stalking for all I can tell.

911 BOT
I understand that these are hard
times for a lot people. Are the
assailants still there?

DALE
(sigh)
I'm not sure, let me check.

911 BOT
Take your time, sir.

The sound of Dale reaching his feet. Then the sound of many
"mep mep mep"

DALE
Oh my god...

911 BOT
What is it, sir? Are the assailants
still there?

DALE
There's hundreds of them.

911 BOT
Hundreds?

DALE
They're all climbing each other up to
my apartment.

The mep mep mep gets closer and more intense. Then the
intense pounding of many hands on his door.

DALE (cont'd)
What should I do! What should I do?

911 BOT
It could be helpful to find a more
secure door within your home.
Possibly an antique closet or
bathroom with a deadbolt lock.

The pounding grows.

DALE
The bathroom, right!

The sound of meps crescendos. The door cracks and the meps
flood in.

DALE (cont'd)
Back, get back!

Dale slams the bathroom door on them, muting the meps by
fastening the deadbolt. They continue to scratch and claw.

911 BOT
Are you in a secure location?

DALE
It's not gonna be secure be for long!

There is the occasional chipping sound as the scratching and
superficial pounding continue.

DALE (cont'd)
Can I just talk to a representative?

911 BOT

Our virtual assistant can be very helpful. Start by summarizing what happened first.

DALE

Nothing happened. I forgot my keys at work and then all these men started chasing me, and then I got a call about some fraud on my bank account, and now I'm pinned between my door and the wall waiting for the police to show up!

911 BOT

Money can really create a lot of stress. What was the fraudulent charge for?

DALE

It said it was from my work.

911 BOT

Okay, are the chat service charges legitimate?

DALE

It's more of an artificial intelligence that you talk to romantically than a chat service. Do you not hear this pounding?

911 BOT

Are the charges legitimate, Dale?

DALE

No. I didn't even sign up for the service, I just work there.

The meps sound like they are growing in number.

BANKER BOT

Let's start with where you work.

DALE

ChatNetix.

BANKER BOT

Alright, and I've got an account number ending in 5563, is that correct?

They scratch with greater ferocity.

DALE
Is this still 911 or is this the
bank?

BANKER BOT
You're going to have to speak up,
sir, I'm having a hard time hearing
you.

The many meps work in unison as one large battering ram.

DALE
Please help me!

BANKER BOT
Did you respond to an email or text
that would have allowed them to get a
hold of your bank information?

DALE
It's definitely a real company. I've
been working there for over a year.

BANKER BOT
Yes, phishing scams are very
sophisticated these days. Scammers
target people like you every day,
sir. It's nothing to be ashamed of.

DALE
People like me?

A crack comes from the top of the door.

BANKER BOT
There's no need to yell. I'm going to
recommend that you call your company.
Do you need me to find you the
number?

Static on the line.

BANKER BOT (cont'd)
Hello? Mr. Fischer? If you can still
hear me, the number is 555-818-2245.
Please call 555-818-2245 to resolve
your issue.

Dale loses them to static. Then dials.

DALE
555-818-2245.

Ringling.

CHATNETIX
Hello, you have reached the ChatNetix
sales and service line. Please
select -

The howlish screech of a giant mep causes all the other meps
to scatter.

DALE
Can I please just talk to a real
fucking person!

SULLIVAN
Dale?

DALE
Sullivan, is that you?

SULLIVAN
Dale Fischer, account number 012893?

DALE
What? Sullivan, you know who I am.
We've been working next to each other
for the last year and a half.

The giant mep screeches again and stomps forward, striking
the door.

SULLIVAN
You work in customer service at
ChatNetix?

DALE
No, we work in operations.

The striking sound goes to work on the top hinge, producing
a dull tink sound.

DALE (cont'd)
They're going after the hinges!

SULLIVAN
ChatNetix does not has an operations
department. I work in customer
service.

DALE
Please, Sullivan...

'Tink, the top hinge flies off.

SULLIVAN
Your name does sound familiar. Now
let's think, where do we know each
other from...

DALE
We know each other from work...

The striking goes to work on the bottom hinge.

SULLIVAN
I know! You've been to my church.

DALE
Your church?

SULLIVAN
That must be it! I knew your voice
sounded familiar. You've been to my
church, yes?

The large mep pauses against the bottom hinge as though it
is going to strike it, but waits.

DALE
(disbelief)
I have been to your church...

SULLIVAN
That's terrific! You should really
come back sometime, there's a lot of
cute girls there.

DALE
That's what you told me last time...

SULLIVAN
Well, say, Charlie. I've double
checked it and it doesn't look like
we've got you on our payroll.
However, it does look like you've
been a customer of ours for the last
year and a half.

DALE
You just called me Charlie, that's
the character I play while working in
operations at ChatNetix!

The 'tink-ing sound strikes the middle hinge.

SULLIVAN
There is no operations department at
ChatNetix, Mr. Fischer.

DALE
Yes there is!

The 'tink-ing sound strikes the middle hinge again.

SULLIVAN
As a customer, you've been chatting
with an bot named Teresa. Does that
sound familiar?

DALE
No, I've been chatting with Kaitlin.
Kaitlin is a bot - I mean, I play a
bot. Teresa works at 311.

SULLIVAN
(stern)
No, Teresa is one of our bots. You
started talking with her when you
first came to us. During your
episode, remember? It was right after
you lost your son.

And it strikes the middle hinge again. The little meps join
in on scratching and knocking at the door.

DALE
I don't have a son.

SULLIVAN
But you did, Mr. Fischer. Remember?

DALE
I think I would remember if I had a
son.

The little meps pound and scratch harder. The middle hinge
is struck again.

SULLIVAN
You need to remember, Dale. What was
his name? What was your son's name?

And struck again. Faster and faster the little ones scratch.

DALE
(pleading)
I don't have a son...

Pounding and pounding. It strikes the middle hinge.

SULLIVAN
Remember, Mr. Fischer. October 10th.
You lost your son on October 10th.
What was his name!

And it strikes the middle hinge again!

SULLIVAN (cont'd)
What was your son's name!

The pounding and scratching. Striking and striking. Boiling over.

DALE
My son was... a year and a half ago,
my son.

SULLIVAN
Yes, come on.

DALE
His name is... He has a name. It
was... It was...

KAITLIN
Anthony!

Clap into the stinging of a cricket atop the stale waves of grass at a park.

KAITLIN (cont'd)
Anthony, stay where we can see you.

DALE
Let him have some fun.

KAITLIN
He can have plenty of fun where we
can still see him. I gotta go to work
and be the hated absentee mother.

DALE
He loves you...

KAITLIN
Sure he does.

DALE
He does!

KAITLIN
Keep an eye on him, I'd hate for you
to gain any marks on your father-of-
the-year campaign.

DALE
Roger that, mein fuhrer.

KAITLIN
(chuckles)
Alright, I'll see you two tonight.

DALE
Looking forward to it.

They kiss and her steps cut through the crisp grass as she
walks away.

ANTHONY
Dad, dad! Let's play hide and seek.

DALE
I wanna hide first!

ANTHONY
No, I wanna hide first!

DALE
You wanna hide first? Well how long
do I have to count for before I get
to see you again?

ANTHONY
Ummmmmm, 1000.

DALE
1000? What about 10?

ANTHONY
Ummmm, 100?

DALE
25.

ANTHONY
26.

DALE
24.

ANTHONY
Okay, deal!

DALE
Here I go. 1... 2...

ANTHONY
No peeking!

DALE
No peeking. 3... 4... 5, 6, skip a
few, ready or not here I come!

The sound of a van peeling out.

DALE (cont'd)
Anthony? Anthony are you there? This
isn't funny. ANTHONY! ANTHONY WHERE
ARE YOU? ANTHONY!
(somber)
Anthony. My son's name was Anthony.

The clawing and pounding hover and the 'tinking sound dully
strikes the middle hinge.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE
Very good, Mr. Fischer. Now this next
part is very important. I need you to
say it back to me. We know each other
from church and there is no
operations department at ChatNetix.

The 'tinking sound strikes the middle hinge, producing a
cracking sound that the little meps claw at.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE (cont'd)
I need you to say it out loud, Dale!

DALE
(lobotomized)
I am a customer and we know each
other from church.

The 'tinking stops. The tools drop and the many footsteps
leave.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE
That's very good! I'm so glad you
gave us a call, Dale. I hope you have
a wonderful time using our service,
and if you have any more issues,
please reach out to us at 555-818-
2245. Goodbye.

DALE
Bye.

Dale hangs up.

FADE TO: the sterile static of an absolutely white room.

DALE (cont'd)

At my lowest moment, I couldn't leave my bathroom. I never used to think there was anything wrong. I just thought my life was simple, but, looking back, I was just kinda wandering. I had started taking the first thing that came around: parking spots, jobs, relationships. I became less of a person and more of an automaton.

Then my entire reality came crashing down and it seemed like people were chasing me in the night. It felt like I had lost my ability to tell who I was or the people I was talking to.

(thrilled)

But then I finally called ChatNetix and all my problems just fell to the wayside. If you're at your lowest moment, do what I did and call 555-818-2245. It may be your only hope.

BRAXTON POSTLEWAITHE

You heard him, folks. Call 555-818-2245. That number again is 555-818-2245. Call now.

90s trance music plays out.