

# MR PERFECT

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## CHAPTER 1

Have you ever met someone totally perfect for you? I did and it was horrible.

A few weeks ago, Dad told me he was going to a robotics convention in New York. It fell over the half-term break, so I assumed he'd take me along for a week of shopping and sightseeing. I assumed wrong. He said I had to stay with my uncle Simon in a tiny village called Snarehill instead.

This was an uncle I hadn't even seen in a decade, so it wasn't like I'd be catching up with a beloved relative or anything. I'd be waiting around in the middle of nowhere with some old guy I didn't even know.

At least it would get me away from my personal robot, Sarah. She's a really old model. Over five

years old, in fact. I can't even install any new personality updates on her because she's so out-of-date.

You'd think having a robotics engineer for a dad would mean you'd always have the newest and best robots. Not if you're me.

Dad had always refused to work for a big robotics firm because he was developing his own secret project in our basement. In the meantime, I had to get by with a robot about as advanced as a pocket calculator.

Sarah shuffled into my room as I was packing my suitcase the night before I had to leave.

“Let me help you with your task,” said Sarah. She headed over to my wardrobe, but froze along the way. Her clear, flat voice switched into a fast mumble. “I need a cab to get me to the airport for half seven.”

Sarah had developed a fault that meant she'd broadcast other people's phone calls in the

middle of our conversations. One minute I'd be chatting with her about school, and the next I'd hear Mr Flanagan from number 43 talking to his mistress in a gross sexy voice.

But if Sarah had been working properly, I'd never have found out the real reason I was being sent to my uncle's house.

"Seven whole days in the middle of nowhere," I said to Sarah as I threw a pair of jeans into the open case on my bed. "This is going to be awful."

"It must be very upsetting for you," said Sarah.

Sarah's stilted voice cut out and I heard my father instead.

"Until next Saturday," he was saying. "I've told her I'm going to a conference in New York... She'll arrive at the house tomorrow afternoon... It's a Turing test for my M35-50... I've got really high hopes for it..."

Dad's phone call cut out and Sarah's voice cut in again. "I have a lot of sympathy for you..."

"Shh!" I said.

So Dad wasn't sending me away for a break at all. He was tricking me into taking part in a Turing test – a test to see if a robot can pass for a human.

No doubt my uncle would introduce me to some mysterious villager who would turn out to be a robot and Dad would call himself a genius because I failed to catch on.

I was about to rush downstairs and have a go at him when I had a better idea. I'd go along to the village, meet his robot and totally fail to be convinced by it.

It would upset him, but he deserved it for forcing me to take part in his mean experiment. He'd only have himself to blame.