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Age: 18, Grade: 12

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Category: Humor

Love, Askew Love

The lights come up, revealing LEXI-CON standing before the screen, awash in the spotlight, grinning and posing mock-candidly.

A cheery ding sounds.

LEXI-CON

HI there! I'm Lexi-con, a fun-loving ex-language-AI who's a happy new addition to Commerce City! I'm looking to experience a classic human dating life, and hopefully learn even more about the newest terms while I'm at it. My dictionary database hasn't been updated in over a decade, so anyone who knows a single new vocabulary word totally wins my heart! Please, just tell me what the kids are saying these days! Message me if you like human places, objects, or people!

Lexi-Con's spotlight goes dark just as JOE DOE's lights up. He wears dark sunglasses, has paint that's vaguely flesh-colored smeared over him, and seems to be making his best attempt at a casual smile. Another ding.

JOE DOE

What is upwards? I am very often called Joe Doe, except for the times I am just called Joe. Or, occasionally, Mister Doe, despite the fact that I do not mist anything! Ha and ha! I am definitely human and have a human height and am not walking on vestigial limbs to achieve said very unfortunately short height. Message me if you would like to speak over text about shirt buttons.

Both spotlights blink on again; Lexi and Joe are striking up a conversation over their devices.

LEXI-CON

Why shirt buttons?

Joe Doe waves, triumphant.

JOE DOE

Hello!

LEXI-CON

If you don't mind me asking, that is.

JOE DOE

Yes, hello! Excused me, I should have gone on to explain, in the text of my profile. I was told by my very human friend, Jeff-eff with two effs, that a conversation starter of a random yet specific object was good. Perhaps fun, even.

Lexi-Con looks smitten. She gestures animatedly as she speaks.

LEXI-CON

I love your inflection! Where're you from?

JOE DOE

Ah. Yes, I am... from cities.

LEXI-CON

Whereabouts?

Joe Doe stalls, trying to dab on a bit more flesh-colored paint to his cheeks.

JOE DOE

What a lovely word! Where and about and 'ssss.' Do you make these words?

LEXI-CON

No, silly, I just teach them! And learn them.

Her voice goes overly chipper with pre-programming.

LEXI-CON (CONT.)

Lots of learning, learning, leaning!

JOE DOE

Learning!

They both look entirely giddy.

JOE DOE (CONT.)

I am a student too. I think we both have a lot to learn from each other, so what do you say that we, you and I, go to a store--perhaps a food store?--and stay there a while?

LEXI-CON

Wow! I don't think anyone's ever asked me out that fast, but kudos to you!

JOE DOE

Cool toes? Thank you.

LEXI-CON

Thank *you!* I'd love to meet up. How about,

A square light pops up over the both of them: a map! It's pointing out part of a city block.

LEXI-CON

Right here. I've heard tell that the coffee's a favorite of humans like you! Do you like coffee?

JOE DOE

Coughs AND fees? How harming! May I go to meet you near the time the digital clock has twice as many lines as it has dots?

LEXI-DON

Such gorgeous turns of phrases! Such language! But I don't know, that *sounds* like a pretty late time to meet up.

How about four?

JOE DOE

Four of what?

LEXI-CON

What?

There is a pause in the messaging.

JOE DOE

I will just... Arrive early, in that case.

LEXI-CON

See you then! You can tell me all about what you're a student of, how about that?

Joe Doe winces.

JOE DOE

Oh. Uh. Yes, toe tally. Ha. See, that was a call back to when you said that my feet were cold.

LEXI-CON

Ha! Can't wait to meet you in person, Joe.

They both sign off. The screen goes black