

My Talking Angela

4PM. Sunday afternoon. I was lying on my bed, listening to a podcast on my phone. My head was resting on my pillow and my feet covered up by a blanket. The day was going by very slowly. There was nothing that needed to be done: No schoolwork or errands, nothing.

Consumed by utter boredom, I decided to check the app store on my phone and find some free games to play. Scrolling through the top rated games, I saw the thumbnails for two titles: “My Talking Angela” that had an image of a white cat with blue eyes and “My Talking Tom” that had a gray cat with green eyes. I kept getting a sense of déjà vu seeing this but I just couldn’t put my finger on where I had previously seen these two games.

Then it finally hit me. A few years back there was a game called “Talking Tom” that had that same gray cat, but all he’d do is stand there on screen unless you say something to him. Then he’ll repeat it to you in a high-pitched voice or he’ll react if you touch him. “Talking Angela” was pretty much the same thing, except there was some big controversy behind it. Something about the app spying on you through Angela’s eyes or coaxing kids to reveal their location. I personally thought it was bullshit: Just the internet making up a rumor to have fun with.

“Which one should I get?” I thought to myself. After only a few seconds of thought, I decided to download the “My Talking Angela” game. I wanted to see how silly or “controversial” this one might be, seeing as how Angela has a history. Then I’d probably uninstall it if I got bored from it.

After about 5 minutes, the game finally installed. For it to take that long for an app, it better be somewhat good. The title screens passed and opened up to an outdoor patio with a baby carriage coming into view. Tiny white paws popped out and the sound of a baby could be heard, giggling. I wasn’t sure what to do next until an arrow appeared over the carriage, signaling me to tap the screen. Once I did, Angela stood on the patio, arms behind her back, smiling at me. She looked like a kitten and wore a pink diaper and pink shirt. The game then told me to feed her, with a fork and spoon icon that I had to tap at the bottom of the screen. It took me and Angela to a small kitchen where milk and crackers were displayed on the table. When I tapped on the food, she would immediately eat it with this overly exaggerated chewing animation and then smile at me.

Next, the game told me to brush her teeth, and then it told me to bathe here. After that, it told me to take her to bed. Once I completed those actions, I leveled up and got some coins and a new clothing option.

“Aw shit,” I mumbled to myself, “This is some virtual pet game.” I rolled my eyes and almost wanted to uninstall it...but damn if this game didn’t know how to pull me in. The cuteness of Angela, while at times overbearing, was too undeniably effective to ignore and I have a soft spot for “leveling up” in games. You could buy her more food, clothes, and even decorations for different parts of her home. Once you hit a certain level, her age increases. By the end of the day, I already got her to “Pre-schooler” level.

It was my guilty pleasure. The game would give me notifications whenever she was hungry, tired, dirty, or needed to sleep. It even allowed me to play mini games to pass the time. You could even record her in-game and share it with friends. It sucked me in and while I hated that fact, I couldn’t deny that it was a great way to get rid of boredom for me.

Two weeks later, Angela was in her teens. I was at level 20 and had a lot of gold to spend on her house. I’m sitting on the couch, watching TV till I got a notification saying she was hungry. I was beginning to get fatigued by the game, even with her cuteness. There just wasn’t much left to do with her at a certain point. Even talking to her and having her repeat stuff to me got old.

When I got to the game, her hunger need was all the way at 0 percent but her happiness, hygiene, and sleep need were all above 50 percent. I got a little tense, wondering if that meant something bad would happen, but all she did was rub her tummy and frown. I took her to the kitchen and fed her a few pizza slices and she was good as new. Recently I had been forgetting to take care of her as much as I used to. Before I’d go to bed, I forgot to put her to bed and the next morning she’d be at 0 percent sleep. Other times, I’d forget to pet her to make happy need stay up and it would occasionally get to 0.

It suddenly came to me that no matter how much I’d forget her, only 1 need would reach 0, while the rest stayed at lower numbers. I remember a long time ago, a thing called Tamagotchi was a very popular game that I’d see all the girls at elementary school playing. That too was a virtual pet game, but the pets were so fragile that they could die in a day without care. It made

me wonder if Angela was the same way. I highly doubted it, seeing how sanitized everything is nowadays, that they'd have any kind of death in a game that was clearly meant for kids to play.

Still curious though, I decided to try it out. I put all her needs up to 100 and then ignored every notification that I'd get. I checked my phone before going to bed and saw all the needs at 50. I closed the game, set my phone on my nightstand, and fell asleep.

The next morning, I realized I overslept. I had class that day. I rushed to get ready, eat, and go. By the time I got there, I noticed that I did not bring my phone with me; it was still at the house. Even though I was slightly annoyed at myself for forgetting my phone, at least I'd have the surprise of knowing how much Angela's needs decreased by the time I got home.

Arriving back at the house, I immediately retrieved my phone and opened the game. All of Angela's needs were at 20. This was taking much longer than I thought. I set down the phone once more and went on with my day. Every hour I checked, the percentage barely went down, only at 13 once dinner rolled by.

I left the phone alone until I got into bed. Before turning off the lights, I checked my phone one last time. Once the app opened, a small grin formed on my face. All the needs were at 1. Surprisingly, I became very anxious. Even though I had a feeling that nothing would happen, at least my curiosity would be satisfied to see what happens.

At that moment, the needs hit 0. Angela looked directly at me and a dialog box appeared on screen:

[This app has stopped working: Wait or Force Close]

I raised my eyebrow at this and pressed "Wait". The dialog box went away and Angela was still staring at me, except now she let out a small whimper, rubbing her tummy and frowning. The dialog box appeared again:

[Wait or Force Close]

Wait.

Angela fell to her knees and held onto her stomach. Her body began to shake and her tail was completely limp. She looked down at the floor, and then looked back up at me.

Without me saying anything to her, she faintly said, "Please..."

The dialog box appeared again

[Force Close]

My back began to sweat and my heart was beating a little faster than usual. Hesitant, I slowly tapped the “Force Close” option and was taken to my home screen.

Taking a shaky breath, I tried to calm myself from what I just saw.

“What the fuck was that all about?” I thought to myself. I was genuinely surprised that this was actually in the game.

I took another deep breath and went to open to the game again, seeing what would happen if I re-entered. After the title screens pass, the in-game patio floor, where Angela usually stands, was empty. I checked the kitchen, the bathroom and her bedroom and she was nowhere to be seen. Going back to the patio, I tapped on the screen multiple times, only for a paw to appear at the bottom of the screen from the left hand side. The paw dug its claws into the floor and dragged to reveal Angela. She dug her other paw in the floor as well and dragged herself out to the center of the screen, lying out on the floor, exhausted. My body froze at what I saw.

Angela was wearing nothing. None of the clothes I gave her or even the preset undergarments that she started with. Her fur looked messy and unkempt, with patches of dirt on her legs, arms, and torso. Her claws were jagged and her tail was limp. When I inspected her more, I noticed that her ribs were clearly visible through her fur. With each breath she took, the view of them become clearer. I gently tapped at her body and she retracted quickly, holding onto her sides in pain, gasping out. I pulled back my finger and then tried to gently pet her, but she retracted again, this time hissing at me.

I bit my lip nervously and decided to take her to the kitchen. She could barely stand up at the table. I fed her a waffle and she slowly opened up her mouth and tried to chew it but immediately spit it up, as if she couldn’t even find the strength to chew or swallow. I took her to the bathroom to see if I could raise her hygiene. When she went to brush her teeth, her whole top and bottom row was rotted out, barely white and her tongue looked shriveled up. I tried to brush them, but they didn’t improve in the slightest. I took her to the bathtub and she shook as hot water ran down her body. She looked at me once more and frowned at me.

“Please stop,” she whispered. Again, I hadn’t said anything for her to repeat back to me. She said that all on her own.

I finally went to the bedroom. She was lying on top of the sheets instead of under them like she usually does. Her breathing was scarce and raspy. Her lips quivered and tears slowly started to form in her eyes. She reached out to me, as if she wanted me to take her hand. I pressed my finger against her paw, feeling sick to my stomach. I couldn’t believe I was actually seeing this. I had to be dreaming. No way this was part of the game...no way...

I looked at the screen to see the record button so I could capture footage of the game. I immediately pressed it and the phone made a beep sound to let me know it was recording.

“I’m sorry,” I uttered. Those two words just escaped me and a wave of guilt ran over me.

Angela repeated back to me in her high pitched voice, “Im sorry.” She slowly began to close her eyes and her arm fell onto the bed. She took one final breath and passed. The need icons went away and the lights in the bedroom turned off. A loud screeching sound emitted from the phone and the thumbnail of the game appeared on screen with Angela’s eyes and mouth blackened out.

The entire screen went to black and I heard Angela’s voice one more time:

“Monster...”

My phone went back to my home screen. My mouth was gaped open, my hands were trembling. I could barely keep a grip on the phone, as my palms were sweating heavily.

This game...this game is aimed for kids mostly. Even with Tamagotchi, if the pet died...it was never that detailed...morbid...you never really saw the pet suffer the way Angela did before death, nor were they that intimate with you when they died.

I took a deep breath and went back to the app. I had to see if any of that actually recorded.

When I got into the game, I saw that same patio again, but it was empty. Suddenly, Angela hopped into the center of the screen from the left, clothed, smiling, and energized. I was extremely puzzled. All her needs were at 100 and she waved at me. I went to the options menu and saw that a video clip had been saved. Playing it back, it got everything from the moment she

was on her death bed, to the moment she called me a monster. I made sure to save the video clip to my computer. I looked up the developer behind the game, Outfit7, and sent them an email with the video clip attached:

“Dear Outfit7,

About a month ago, I downloaded your game “My Talking Angela”. For two weeks, I played the game accordingly, taking care of her and making sure her needs were fulfilled. After a while though, I wanted to try something different and I decided to let her needs go to 0 percent. All of them. I was curious to see what would happen, if Angela could actually die. The clip that is attached in this email is footage I captured when all the needs hit zero. I wasn’t able to capture what happened when I first entered the game...I was too much in disbelief at what was going on, on screen. She was thin to the point her ribs were showing, groaning in pain, her teeth rotting out. I can understand if you wanted to teach kids a lesson by showing them the consequences of what could happen when you don’t take care of a pet, but this is too far. This is a bit much...even for me. I’d rather not leave my name, but I would like an explanation as to why something like this was in the game. How did something like this even get through?

Sincerely,

A disturbed customer”

After sending the email, I couldn’t go to sleep. I went to the living room and watched some TV for a bit. An hour passed and it was 11PM. My eyes were getting heavy and I had to get some rest.

Throughout the night, I kept hearing Angela’s frail voice, calling out for help, looking defeated broken. The image of her face blackened out and her hissing kept popping up in my dreams, making me constantly wake up in the middle of the night. By morning, I barely felt rested.

Wanting to know if the devs responded to my email, I went to my computer and saw a notification in my inbox, from Outfit7. I took a deep breath and opened up the email.

“Dear disturbed customer,

We here at Outfit7 are extremely sorry for what you have seen. We can reassure you that that was not supposed to be in the game. When the game was in early development, the programmers liked to play around with the game, putting in different, crazy features in the game, just for laughs in the workplace, but would immediately remove it for the final product. One of those features, which was the one you witnessed, was our team wanting to see if they could imitate those video game...creepypastas? Or whatever people call them. They were stories about haunted video games and every now and again those stories would be brought to life by people in the modding community, to make it an actual game. The team wanted to imitate those games by putting random creepy stuff in there, such as Angela speaking on her own, or her looking like a skeleton, etc. Of course, they are advised to remove such content immediately after they’ve had their laughs and giggles. Why this was never removed, I have no idea. My guess is that someone wanted to keep it on there as an “easter egg” but it would only be triggered by all of Angela’s needs going to 0. You see, we launched the “My Talking Tom” app before “My Talking Angela” to see how it would be received. It got great reception and very interesting statistics. We track how people play the game by collecting their game data and customers would always make sure that Tom was well kept. Same goes for Angela when we first launched the game. Out of the massive number of people who played the game, no one ever let all of Tom or Angela’s needs fall to 0 percent...except for you...regardless, that’s no excuse as to why such a scary feature was kept into the game. Whoever left the feature on there probably thought that since no one ever let the needs go to 0, no one would ever access at all and therefore wouldn’t even make the effort to remove the feature. Believe me though, they will be met with harsh consequences. Please do not share the clip you recorded with anyone else, as the game will be patched to remove this feature ASAP. Once again, we at Outfit 7 are very sorry for what you witnessed.

Sincerely,

Samo Login, CEO of Outfit 7”

I closed the email and sat back in my chair. So many thoughts running through my head: The fact that I was the first guy to see that. The fact that the team was allowed to dick around with the game in such a manner...the fact that...no one else ever did what I did...they never let Angela or Tom's needs go to zero...and I was the one that did it.

Did I deserve to see what saw? Was I really a monster for just letting her die, even though she's not real?

I picked up my phone and went to the app store to immediately uninstall the game. I didn't want anything to do with that game or any of Outfit7's products after this. As I went to uninstall, I saw the option to leave a review on the app. I was so tempted to upload that clip onto Youtube so people could see what I saw, but I didn't want to witness a possible lawsuit. If I leaked it, they'll know it was me who originally did it and they'd have all grounds to sue me.

But part of me had to let people know somehow. I had to warn them. No telling when the game was going to be patched. There's always the possibility somebody could do what I did and see Angela die. I decided to leave a review:

[Rating: 3 out of 5 stars. Why: It's an okay game, but whatever you do...don't let all of her needs go to 0]