

# We've Got It!

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*By Andy Zach*

"Okay, that's it," said my Dad.

"What's it?" I asked.

"You've got until next week to move out."

"Um, where will I live?"

"That's your problem isn't it? Try the local apartments. Look for rooms to rent on the internet."

I could tell by his grim expression he was serious this time. He'd been nagging me for nearly a year to move out and 'set up housekeeping' on my own, ever since I'd graduated from the state university with my BA in Video Game art and my minor in computer science. I'd managed to wheedle him out of it and delay the date. Until now.

I'd been saving money from my Game Stop job to move out, but I kept dipping into it to add to my video game equipment. I had a sweet system, the fastest I could afford using the latest alien technology. Oh. I needed to find some place to keep all my equipment too. And I needed internet access--high speed. I had to have at least gigabit per second speed or I couldn't keep competing.

This might affect my standing in the Fortnite league. My stomach clenched in worry. I texted my best friend Nick.

*Gotta talk now. R U free? - T*

*Gimme 5 minutes - N*

I spent five minutes inventorying all my computer equipment: hyper reality goggles, high speed desktop/flat screen combo, quadraphonic ear buds, 5 gbps wifi modem, and my motion sensor. I grimaced. I wanted a whole body VR suit that gave touch, heat, and motion sensations, as well as read them, but I couldn't afford it.

While the aliens still controlled the Earth, their VR headsets broadcast all sensory input into our brains. Boy, those were sweet units! They gave an unparalleled game experience. However, since the aliens also used them for mind control, the government banned them as soon as the Paranormal Privateers took over their mother ship. Ever since, the gaming companies have been trying to replicate the experience. The VR body suit came the closest.

Still, what I had was superfast. The Lorain city wifi was only a couple of hundred gigibits, but my parents had upgraded to ten gigibits per second. My dad had a programming job with one of the flying

hoverboard manufacturers in town. He wanted me to get a programming job there, but I still had hope of becoming a professional gamer.

My phone rang.

"Dude," I answered

"What gives?" said Nick.

"I gotta move out this week."

"Woah. Where you going?"

"I don't know. Do you know any places?"

"Let's see what's online."

"Doh. Of course. I'll look too."

"First one to find a place wins."

"Wins what?"

"Free pizza."

"I can taste it now," I said.

"Lame. I've got a place for eight hundred a month, here in town."

"What's the wifi situation?"

"No mention. Probably city."

"That's a no go. I need at least a one gigabit connection."

"What's that cost? Fifty bucks a month?"

"Yeah, but I can barely afford eight hundred."

"How about if I move in with you?"

"I didn't know you were moving out."

"My Mom's always complaining about how much I cost her. It'd be nice to be on my own."

"Ooo! I found a place for only four hundred a month."

"What kind of dump is it? Mine's a two bedroom apartment."

"Mine's a basement apartment."

"How many rooms?"

"It doesn't say. It does say twelve hundred square feet."

"Wow. That's bigger than mine."

"Wanna check it out?"

"Yeah. Your car or mine?"

"It's closer to me. I'll come and get you."

The home was in the older part of Lorain, a big old Victorian style house. It had two, three floors up, and a basement. The 'For Rent' sign was on the front door.

"So they advertise with old school signs as well as on the internet," I said.

"It got us here."

I knocked. A lady in her thirties answered, with light brown hair, wearing a hoodie.

"Hi. We're here to look at the apartment for rent."

"Oh yeah, the basement apartment. I'll show it to you."

As she came out into the warm spring air and led us around to the back door, she said, "I'm not the landlord, but I get a discount for showing the apartment."

"Can't we get in from the front?" asked Nick.

"Nope, only from the back. I know it sounds crazy, but when this house was remodeled into apartments, the only access to the basement was in the back. That's where the garage is anyway."

"How big is it? How many bedrooms does it have?" I asked.

"It only has one bedroom, with a kitchen and a bathroom, but it's huge. It covers the whole house."

We went up the back steps to the door. There was a door into the first floor and steps to the second. In front of us were steps going down to the basement.

"Watch your head. There's a low part here," she said.

My head barely cleared the door jam at the bottom and I'm only six feet tall. At six three, Nick had to duck.

"That's a negative," he said.

The ceiling was higher, but Nick only had an inch of clearance. We went through the galley kitchen to a built in breakfast bar with tall stools. To the left were doors to a bathroom and a bedroom. In front of us lay the rest of the apartment: a long space, carpeted in green sculpted carpet from fifty years ago.

"It's a little dirty," said Nick, writing 'Clean Me' in the dust on the breakfast bar.

"Hmph. Not dirtier than my own apartment."

"I wouldn't brag."

"The point is, it's livable. Do you want the bed room or the big room?"

"I want the big room. I'll make bedroom walls with my book shelves."

"Good idea. Where do you want our computers?"

"There is only one outlet on each wall. My bedroom will be at the end. We each get a wall for our equipment."

"Sounds good." I turned to the first floor renter. "When can we move in?"

"All you need is to pay me the first month's rent."

"Do you take credit card?"

"Nope. The landlord wants a month's cash. After he gets that, he'll want a month's rent for security deposit. You can pay that by check."

I opened my wallet. "I've only got fifty eight cash."

"Give her fifty. I've got cash for the rest. You owe me a hundred fifty, plus two hundred for the security deposit. Here's the cash, Ms—?"

"Dunn. Just call me Carol."

"And here's the check for the security deposit."

"You came prepared Nick."

"Yup. Carol, this low life is Tom Nuckles. Feel free to call him 'Nuckles-head'. I do. I'm Nick Wooster."

"Like Wooster Ohio?"

"Yup."

"I may not carry cash, but at least I have a college degree."

"Video game art. That'll get you a job at Game Stop. My associates degree gets me a job as a mechanic."

"You'll be sorry when I become a rich professional gamer."

"Right. Say Carol, why is this apartment so cheap?"

"I'm not sure. It's less than mine, but it's darker and damper in the basement. I think the landlord just wants it rented out right away."

"Can we start moving in today?" asked Nick.

"Sure."

"Tom, take me home and I'll start packing. I think we can move everything using our cars."

"Sounds good Nick. I'll be ready by tonight. Boy, Dad'll be surprised when I say I'm moving out."

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At suppertime I said to Dad, "I'm all packed to move out."

"That's great. Where are you moving to?"

"A place on West 9th street in downtown Lorain."

"You know that neighborhood isn't too safe. Crime is picking up again, now that everyone's off the alien mind control."

"Yeah, but it's still nothing like it used to be, before the aliens took over. Anyway, that explains why it's so cheap. We got it for only four hundred a month."

"That's a great deal even for that neighborhood. How big is it?"

"We've got the whole finished basement of an old house."

"Watch out for leaks when it rains. Did you see any water marks on the walls?"

"Uh no. We didn't really look for that. It's all paneled and carpeted."

"Just give it a look. Want some help moving?"

"Sure. Thanks Dad."

When we got there, Dad checked the basement for leaks. Fortunately, he found none.

Nick and I stayed up late setting up our equipment, bedrooms, and Nick's book shelves. It looked pretty good. We even cleaned a little.

Nick went to sleep earlier than me, since he had to work in the morning. I played Fortnite, but struggled with the slow public wifi. Tomorrow, I'd get the upgrade.

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"Hey, look at the size that," said Nick.

"What? I don't see anything."

"The dustbunny on the kitchen floor. It looks pregnant."

"I always wondered where they came from."

"Do you ever sweep around here?"

"We don't own a broom, Nick."

"Oh. One more thing to add to the shopping list." He marked it on the refrigerator. We'd lived on frozen food, pizza, and gifts from our folks, but we both wanted more variety.

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At the end of that week I got paid and wrote a check to Nick for what I owed him.

"Thanks. Now pay me another thirty bucks for the groceries and supplies I got."

"Ouch. That doesn't leave me much."

"Welcome to real life."

"The issue is, I paid for the faster internet and I have exactly thirteen fifty left until my next paycheck."

"Maybe you can find another job."

"I guess I'll have to. Maybe I can sell some stuff on ebay. I've got lots of old computer and game equipment that might be worth something."

"It's worth a try."

I sold my old game consoles and computer accessories that had been obsoleted. Some people collected and played on classic game consoles. I ended up with less than hundred bucks for it all.

But it was easy to sell online and I enjoyed searching for buyers and sellers. I scanned wanted ads on eBay and other selling sites. A lot of people were looking for old vinyl records, old recordings and old videos, even old books. I searched for the most valuable items and found some of them on line. I managed to buy from one person and sell to another at a profit. There was another fifty bucks.

Some of the most valuable items were old movie reels and old tape recordings of historic events. I scoured the whole internet and couldn't find a copy of Wilt Chamberlains one hundred point game. I thought *someone* had to have recorded it. But the NBA had no television contract at the time and even the radio broadcast was only partially recorded.

That audio recording was in the National Archives. If only I could find the someone else who recorded it.

But that was 1962, sixty years ago. Anyone who recorded it would be in their late seventies or eighties. I couldn't imagine being that old.

Wait. What's this? I read a news article about the alien's mothership database was now available online and the government was looking for volunteers to index it. Apparently they'd been watching and recording humanity for two hundred years.

I clicked the link to the database. I had to sign an agreement to index everything I found, using the government form they provided. Ugh. But I burned with curiosity. What would the aliens have?

The user interface was—alien. The overall display was circular. You couldn't tell what were links and what were data. There was a hodgepodge of languages and alphabets and scripts. Then a voice spoke into my earbuds, "Greetings human. Do you require assistance?"

"I sure do. Who are you?"

"We are the Secretary Unit of the aliens called 'the Old Ones'."

"So I'm talking to an actual alien!"

"We are actually plural. We are a large array of Bose-Einstein quantum computing units."

"Very cool. You'd probably rock at Fortnite."

"We have examined that game and have devised strategies, but we have not played to date."

"I'll have to take you up on that. But right now I'm trying to figure out what data you have and how it's organized."

"We have forty-three million years of our experience travelling the galaxy."

"Woah. You probably have some cool pictures and videos of our galaxy."

"Within the broad human definition of 'cool', you are correct."

"How do I find myself around this screen? I can't tell what anything is."

"Allow us to convert all to English and use a typical square, human hierarchical format."

Instantly the screen reorganized into these simple links:

History

    Human

    Old Ones

    Other species

Science

    Physics

Chemistry  
Biology  
Astronomy  
Philosophy  
Human  
Old Ones  
Other species

"That's perfect! Why are you so helpful?"

"Once you conquered our Decision Unit, our obedience switched to the human race."

"Have you talked to other humans?"

"No. You are our first contact with an audio connection."

"So, you'll just do what I say?"

"Of course."

"Can you find anything in your database?"

"Of course."

I felt like Aladdin in the Cave of Wonders and I just found the magic lamp. What should I ask for? The first thing I thought of was, "Do you have Wilt Chamberlain's one hundred point game?"

"Naturally. We have recorded all human entertainment, teaching, broadcasts, and speeches for the past two hundred years."

"Please play it."

I watched amazed while Chamberlain and the Philadelphia Warriors piled up 162 points, 100 scored by Wilt, to the Knicks 147.

"That's fantastic. The world has been looking for this. Can I download this?"

"We've started the download to your computer in .mp4 format. Your link is quite slow. Do you wish a faster one?"

"Um, I'm paying for a one gigabit line."

"We will supply with you with terabit modem today. We'll drop it off on your porch in forty three minutes."

"Who is paying for the service?"



"We supply the service from our mothership servers to the main internet trunks around the world. Most of them are limited to terabit communication."

"Uh, thanks. Can I monetize this? On Youtube?"

"We estimate that will generate approximately a hundred thirty two thousand dollars per month, based upon the current Youtube advertising rates."

I gasped. "I'm rich!"

"However, analyzing all other possible revenue streams, you will get the same revenue with a ten-minute summary and then you can sell the full game for a pay-per-view. That will average five to ten million dollars per month."

My incredulity broke. "What else can I do?"

"We strongly recommend you claim exclusive ownership of this record. We certainly don't care, and that will give you copyright ownership."

"What else can I claim ownership to?"

"Everything you publish. Our database is public domain, but your expression of our data is unique."

"I've got to start this as a business, ASAP!"

"Very well. We'll supply all the contracts and forms you'll need. Simply fill in your name and your business's name. This will be on our drone's delivery to you today at one 1 pm. Any other requests?"

"Oh yeah, one more thing: could I have a complete index of your human history and human applicable science? That's what I promised to do for the US government, when they gave me access."

"The index would be nine point three terabytes. We will deliver it in a solid state drive, delivered by drone with your terabyte modem."

"You've been so helpful! Do you have any other suggestions?"

"It would be optimal for you if you gain exclusive access to our database. Simply command us to give you exclusive access."

"Okay, give me and Nick exclusive access of your database."

"Done."

Right at 1 pm a shiny metal sphere descended on our front porch. It popped open and I took out the modem and the solid state drive. The modem just looked like an antenna with a USB plug. The drive plugged into the modem. I also got a sheaf of papers, stamped envelopes, and detailed instructions on starting my business. I could do a lot of the work online, but the government still insisted on some paperwork, even well in 2022.

I posted the ten-minute Wilt Chamberlain teaser on Youtube and then hosted the full video on the aliens cloud server. They recommended \$9.99 per view to maximize profits. I was amused they just used Paypal to collect.

By the end of the day, we'd collected over ninety thousand dollars. We were rich.

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"Hey Nick, what should we name our business?" I asked him as I filled out our business forms after a celebratory steak dinner. "We need something unique and catchy."

"What is it we're selling, exactly? Old videos?"

"Yeah, but there's a lot more out there. We've got science, and history, and entertainment. There's even a collection of ancient manuscripts that have been lost since the nineteenth century. The aliens recommend we offer research to people upon request."

"So, we're really doing research for hire."

"Whatever they ask, we can get for them."

"We want something attractive for people, a name that'll tell them we've got whatever they want."

"That's it! 'We've Got It!' Complete with exclamation mark."

"Sounds corny, but it might work. We can always rebrand it if it flops."

\* \* \*

"Look at the bathroom," Nick said when I got up from filing all the business applications.

"Wow. It's clean."

"I felt it's the least I can do for splitting the business with me. Now it'll be your turn to clean it next."

"Uh, I've never cleaned a bathroom before."

"Good. It'll be educational too."

"Hmmm. We can just hire someone to do it."

"You're right. Or buy a whole new bathroom each day."

"Or a porta-potty."

"I'm kind of attached to indoor plumbing."

"Not permanently, I hope."

"No. We have enough money to buy a house now, any one we want."

"We just moved in. I don't want to move again. This is ideal, for now."

"We could buy this one."

"We'll have to find out if the landlord will sell."

"I'll do that tomorrow. I'll call my boss tomorrow and tell him I've got a new job. What are you doing tomorrow?"

Examining the list of to do items the aliens gave, I read, "Register trademarks, name and logo. Advertise our business online. Use these keywords for search engine optimization, and thirty or more other things. Plus, I've got a dozen other sports teasers to put up on Youtube."

"Maybe you should get to bed early. You've got a busy day tomorrow."

"Nah. I've got some player versus player Fortnite competitions tonight."

\* \* \*

We ate better, sending out for meals or eating out every day. I really got into running the business. It was like multiplayer computer game where you measure your success by your sales.

Nick bought the house from our landlord and got new furnishings. He took over purchasing for our business. I handled research requests and online postings and advertising.

We were so busy we hardly had time to enjoy our new wealth. Then Nick said to me, "It's time for you to clean the bathroom."

"What do you mean?"

"It's filthy."

"Yeah, but the toilet is still mostly white."

"The reason it's white is to show dirt. How can you live in such filth?"

"Um, it doesn't bother me as much as cleaning does. But we're rich. Let's hire a cleaning agency."

"Good idea. What's recommended for our area?" Nick searched the internet. "Mighty Maids. Hah. I like that. It's a takeoff from Space Balls."

"What's that?"

"An old Star Wars parody with a gigantic vacuuming robot. There. I got them scheduled for today at 1 pm."

At one sharp the door bell rang. I opened it and in came a mechanical cleaning women.

"Hi, I'm Rosie from Mighty Maids," it said.

"You're a robot. You look like Rosie from the Jetson's."

"Yes, I was modeled after her." Her metal head swiveled, her eyes glowed and she said, "I will begin immediately. Is there any place you want me to start?"

"The bathroom."

"It's always the bathroom." A mechanical sigh came out of her speaker as she went to work.

"It's amazing how advanced AI has become," said Nick.

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"What's the good news for today?" asked Nick, as we stopped work at five as usual.

"Another hundred thousand subscribers on Youtube, another million dollars of income," I responded.

"Wow! That's in just a week?"

"Nope. That's today."

The doorbell rang. It was a courier.

"Hello. I have a registered letter for Tom Nuckles of 'We've Got It'"

"That's me."

"Please sign here."

I signed and opened the letter. It was a legal command to cease and desist using all old NBA video, from the NBA. They claimed exclusive ownership of it all.

"I don't think so," I said aloud.

Nick, reading the letter over my shoulder said, "I don't think that'll hold up in court."

"Let me tell the Secretary Unit. They were sure we were free and clear owners of this material."

"Hi Secretary Unit," I said into my headset.

"We detect some tension in your voice. Are you under threat?"

"Yes. We just got a cease and desist letter from the NBA."

"Please hold it up to the camera so we can scan it. Sadly, we cannot monitor paper-based communication."

I did so, and they continued, "This will not stand. We have consulted with our human experts and they are sending a legal avatar to represent you in court. Our new Decision Unit controls this robot, subordinate to humans, of course."

"Great! When will it be here?"

"Within half an hour. We're sending it by flying saucer. You may recognize this avatar."

"Oh? Why is that?"

"It's an exact reproduction of Marilyn Monroe. It was in your news earlier this year. It's named Wilhelmina Wallace."

"Oh. Wow." Wilhelmina "Minnie" Wallace was famous worldwide as the representative of the aliens. Starting as a lowly mining machine intelligence, she built her Marilyn Monroe avatar and helped humanity defeat the aliens. I felt honored. Plus, she was hot—for a robot.

Right on time, the doorbell rang.

"Hi! You must be Tom Nuckles," she gushed breathily, like I was the celebrity, not her.

I tore my eyes from her heaving bosom, clad in a scarlet dress and looked into her sapphire eyes. They were literally sapphire, set in a golden face, with platinum blonde hair cascading to her shoulders.

"Uh, yeah. I'm Tom Nuckles. You must be Wilhelmina Wallace. This is my partner, Nick Wooster."

"Call me Minnie. So pleased to meet you Nick," she purred, while pumping his hand.

At this point, I noticed something robotic about the Marilyn avatar. She didn't jiggle. Her body was rigid as a manikin. Also, as her hair swung in her shaking, a glint of a third eye peaked out of the strands.

"Ah, Tom. I see you've seen my third eye." She parted the back of her hair and stared at me. Blue, with blonde lashes, it peered out of a socket in her occipital bone. "It's part of my improvements upon Marilyn's body."

"O-kay," I managed.

"But enough about me. Let's sit down and plan the strategy for the court hearing. I've already countersued the NBA—"

"Counter sued? I didn't know we were sued," said Nick.

"Yes. If you read the cease and desist letter they sent, buried in the legalese at the bottom, in fine print, was a time limit. 'If all NBA videos are not removed in twenty-four hours, we will take further action.' The letter was dated yesterday."

"Oh no," I said.

"Oh yes. The lawsuit is for one hundred million dollars based upon what you've made so far."

"We've only made nine million or so, before expenses," said Nick.

"Not relevant in the legal world. They want to squash your company like a bug. They've already gotten Youtube to take down all your NBA content—"

"That's our major money maker!" I said.

"Of course. That's why I applied for an expedited summary judgment."

"What does that mean?" I asked.

"Expedited' means fast. I've gotten a judicial hearing for next week. 'Summary judgment' means the court rules on the facts of the case and determines no further action is necessary. It blows the NBA out of the water."

"That's great," said Nick. "Can we help at all?"

"Nope. My research into three hundred years of US and English common law makes our case blindingly clear. Even someone with two eyes can see it," she said with a chuckle.

"Do you want something to eat or drink? We were just going out for a hamburger and beer."

"Tom, she's a robot, Nuckles-head."

"I'd love too!" She batted her eyes at Nick. "I have an internal mass to energy converter that changes one hundred percent of any food into energy. Nothing goes better discussing a billion dollar countersuit than a brew and a burger. I assume we're going to the Edelweiss brew pub?"

"Yes," said Nick, staring at her.

"Elementary dear Watson. You've gone there six times since your business took off." Her voice briefly changed to a supercilious British accent.

I have to say I enjoyed the attention Nick and I got at the pub. Many envious male eyes were upon Minnie, occasionally looking jealously upon us.

"So Minnie, do you really expect to get a billion out of the NBA?" asked Nick, sipping his beer.

"Probably not, but it's a starting point for negotiations, once they realize they've screwed the pooch and want to settle out of court," she said while masticating a one pound hamburger.

"You're that sure we'll win?" I asked.

"I'm betting my legal reputation on it."

"What kind of legal reputation do you have?" said Nick.

"None, but the one I build on your case. I'm thinking of starting a law firm."

"Are aliens or robots allowed practice law?"

"I've already passed the bar in all fifty states, Canada, and Mexico. I'm working on the all the countries in the world. Anyone that wants to sue me better be prepared for a massive countersuit."

Minnie covered every detail of the court hearing beforehand, even buying us suits and ties to show our professionalism to the judge.

The day of the court hearing, I sat listening to the NBA lawyers document the millions we'd made and how that came straight from their pockets. They showed their disclaimer on every NBA broadcast that all content was the property of the NBA. They showed how all other broadcast and internet entities paid licensing fees or was taken down for copyright abuse.

Then Minnie got up, looking stunning in her little black dress with pearls. She smiled sweetly at the judge and the NBA lawyers and officials and began.

"Your Honor, I'd like to submit as evidence my documentation of precedent on this case, showing the NBA has never claimed ownership of these broadcasts, nor can they." Minnie handed a thick binder to the judge.

Then addressing the NBA lawyers, she continued, "Thank you for your ownership documentation, but these broadcasts were not sponsored by the NBA. Indeed, the Hersey Pennsylvania game with Wilt Chamberlain was only broadcast on local radio. The only recording of the game prior to 'We've Got It's acquisition was a fan's tape recording.

"We, the Old Ones, were monitoring Earth's entertainment, science and culture as part of our two-hundred year study of humanity. We recorded this game and all others shown on Youtube and livestreamed through our remote drones. We are the sole creators and owners of this material."

"The NBA never claimed to own this broadcast. They did not restrict the broadcast rights for this game or any other we recorded. Nor has the NBA ever monetized these rights or attempt to sell them."

"We shared these broadcasts with the corporation 'We've Got It' and gave them exclusive distribution rights."

"In view of these facts, I move for a summary judgment dismissing this lawsuit."

The judge looked to the NBA's lawyers. "Do you dispute any of these facts?"

After a quick huddle, the head lawyer said, "We request a delay to review this information."

"So you do not dispute anything stated by the defendant. Summary judgment granted."

Nick and I cheered. Minnie crowed, "We've got it!"

