

MY DAY ON FACEBOOK

(STUDENT EDITION)

By **Monica Bauer**

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SYNOPSIS: When an unemployed, depressed would-be novelist is given a Beta Test model of the new app Super Social, she becomes more successful than she ever imagined. For a while.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 females)

BETSY (f).....	A would-be novelist, 28 going on 60. <i>(134 lines)</i> .
DEANIE (f).....	BETSY's 24-year-old roommate, a junior software developer for MicroWorks Corporation. <i>(39 lines)</i>
DCC (f).....	Dallas Cowboy's Cheerleader, the personification of Super Social, a new Artificial Intelligence program. <i>(95 lines)</i>

(ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE)

SETTING

Brooklyn, New York. Present day. BETSY's bedroom. A small depressing mess of a place, one of two bedrooms in the apartment. At rise, Deanie has just finished installing a new program on Betsy's computer.

DURATION: 25 minutes

DEDICATION

*Dedicated to my cousin and friend, Pat Sexton,
who would never do any of these things*

DO NOT COPY

DEANIE: You are now officially installed.

BETSY: And that means...

DEANIE: You've agreed to all the 16 gazillion things you have to agree to in order to be an official Beta Tester of Super Social. Now the last thing to install is the actual voice. You're supposed to choose those yourself. All part of the customization protocol. So, go for it.

BETSY: Why don't you choose for me?

DEANIE: Because customer satisfaction, which is a huge part of what the Beta Test is about, is predicated on whether or not you are happy with your choices. They have to be YOUR choices.

BETSY: I don't feel like choosing right now.

DEANIE: Oh, come on. This is the fun part. How about I run through the choices, and you say yes or no? Can you do that?

BETSY: I guess.

DEANIE: Male or female.

BETSY: Male. No, female.

DEANIE: It's binary. Pick one and stick with it. Or else I will have to kill you.

BETSY: Female.

DEANIE: Done. Now, accent.

BETSY: Really?

DEANIE: I told you, this is the coolest part! Not just ordinary voices, but voices you choose, and of whatever kind you'd like to hear narrating your emails and your social media posts. What kind of voice would make you the happiest? Come on, Betsy. You can do this.

BETSY: A rich one, offering me a job.

DEANIE: Not an option. Although... there are some accents and voice types that are upper status. Remember, this is the voice you will hear every day. Once you choose a voice, that's it.

BETSY: Oh God. I can't. Not even.

DEANIE: Imagine the voice you want to speak all your social media messages out loud. Not like Stephen Hawking's computer voice; that sounds like a really rational serial killer. The whole point of this, it's a real human voice. People will sit much longer in front of a computer that seems like a friend.

BETSY: Siri wasn't a friend. Siri was an abusive babysitter.

DEANIE: This beats the crap out of Siri. So, accent.

BETSY: Italian. Italians are always having so much... fun. Eating pasta and gelato, driving those tiny little scooters—

DEANIE: Not an option.

BETSY: But you said “any accent.”

DEANIE: Any accent in the United States. How about Ivy Leaguer graduate? She’ll sound like she owns everything. Imagine a Princeton grad married to a Yale grad reading you all your social media. Wouldn’t that cheer you up?

BETSY: God no!

DEANIE: You can get a lower status voice as well. If it would help you feel better.

BETSY: What’s the lowest status you got?

DEANIE: You won’t want that one.

BETSY: Why not?

DEANIE: That one was Darrel’s idea. Darrel is an idiot.

BETSY: You said these are supposed to be MY CHOICES.

DEANIE: Okay, but don’t say I didn’t warn you. The bottom of the status barrel, Dallas Cowboy’s Cheerleader.

BETSY: That’ll do.

DEANIE: She’ll probably want you to eat fried food and watch football.

BETSY: At the same time?

DEANIE: You are not taking this seriously.

BETSY: Sorry. Continue.

DEANIE: Done. Female, Dallas Cowboy’s Cheerleader. Last choice. Supportive or neutral?

BETSY: Wow.

DEANIE: I told you, this is really whack. Advanced stuff. And you can’t talk about it to anybody, it’s one of the sixty gazillion things you already agreed to.

BETSY: But it’s the only interesting thing that has happened to me all year!

DEANIE: Look, you’re getting this for free. And you’re getting this a whole six months, maybe a year, before anybody else on the planet. Just because your roommate happens to work for the Microworks Corporation. But... if you can’t keep your mouth shut, I’ll just hit “uninstall” and be on my merry way. After spending the last 45 minutes getting it installed. Thanks a lot, Betsy.

DEANIE'S finger hovers ominously over the computer keyboard.

BETSY: DEANIE! Don't. You're right. I'm really very lucky. I'm going to repeat that to myself all day. Just to myself. Lucky me. Lucky, lucky me. My lips are sealed. And my digital lips are sealed. Please?

DEANIE: Okay. Let's finish up, then. Which style do you want, supportive, or neutral?

BETSY: Neutral, I guess.

DEANIE: *(A pause: DEANIE puts a supportive arm around BETSY.)*

Bets, if I were you, I'd get "supportive." In fact, when we were designing it, I had you in mind. A lot of the senior software engineers wanted a straight neutral, but I thought of you, sitting here day after day, unable to find work, unable to revise your so-called novel, and I wanted you, and all the other out of work depressed so-called novelists out there, to have a choice. To get a voice that lifted you up. Make you feel good about yourself. And maybe, if you heard a supportive voice all day long, you might be able to revise your so-called novel, and send it out again, or even... dare I even think it... look for a real job. I spent all this time breaking you in as a roommate, so you never give me a lick of trouble, and I'd hate to throw it all away just because you're more depressed than a feminist at Comic-Con. But you've got to start bringing more money in. So how's about choosing a nice, soothing, supportive—

BETSY: Supportive, then.

DEANIE: Great. Done. Now, it's all yours. I gotta run. Almost late. Stupid thing took 20 minutes longer to install than we thought. See? We're learning stuff already. If it freezes on you, here's the button for Tech Support.

BETSY: I hate Tech Support.

DEANIE: Everybody does. Okay, if you really get in trouble, you can message me, okay? I'm like your own personal Tech Support, and I speak English. So cheer up. You're making history here. Or helping me make history. I do love making history. *(DEANIE exits.)*

BETSY: *(As she sets herself up at the computer, takes a look at the instructions DEANIE left for working with the software, finishes her cup of tea, and talks to herself, as she often does.)* She loves making history. She loves making me feel like an idiot. *(She chooses an email to be read on her keyboard.)* Okay, Dallas Cowboy's Cheerleader. DCC. Let's see how you do. Read my email.

DCC enters, halfway to center stage, stops, and faces the audience directly. All her lines are delivered with DCC facing the audience. BETSY speaks to her computer when she addresses DCC.

DCC: *(An extremely cheerful Southern female voice.)* "We are sorry to inform you that your manuscript was not suitable for our list this year. Although your first chapter was intriguing, our readers felt that the character of Elizabeth was under-written."

BETSY: Stop! Next.

DCC: "Although we loved the title—"

BETSY: Next!

DCC: "Thank you for sending us your manuscript titled *Elizabeth's Revenge*. *(DCC pauses, as if waiting for BETSY to say "Next!")*

BETSY: *(Tentatively.)* Go on.

DCC: "However, we felt that the character of Elizabeth was over-written. If you'd like—"

BETSY: NEXT!

DCC: Are you sure?

BETSY: Say again?

DCC: Are you sure you'd like me to continue reading your email this morning?

BETSY: You're giving me options?

DCC: That's the great thing about life! Life is full of options!

BETSY: Very... supportive.

DCC: Your life is up to you!

BETSY: I thought you were just supposed to read stuff!

DCC: Any program can just "read stuff." I'm a product of the MicroWorks Corporation. At MicroWorks, we go above and beyond the possible!

BETSY: Nothing can go beyond the possible.

DCC: At MicroWorks, we can do anything! May I open your Facebook?

BETSY: Sure. Why not?

DCC: “Why not” is a religious question, and all such questions will be referred to the religion of your choice. Please choose from the following menu:

Animism

Buddhism

Confucianism

Taoism (*pronounced with a hard ‘D’, Daoism*)

Episcopalianism—

BETSY: I’m an atheist.

DCC: (*Pause.*) I can’t find anything supportive to say about that. Are you really an atheist? Or are you just an agnostic, open to spirituality?

BETSY: When you put it like that...

DCC: Open to Spirituality. Very Good!

BETSY: You think that’s good?

DCC: Open to spirituality is very good! If the user lives in a world without any hope of redemption, it’s harder to be supportive. Would you like me to open the Wikipedia article that discusses your question from the perspective of an agnostic open to spirituality?

BETSY: I’ve lost track of the question.

DCC: The question was “why not.”

BETSY: Just open my Facebook. Read anything. I don’t care. Whatever...

DCC: From Lindsay Smalls. “I’m happy to announce that my agent got me a rather surprising advance for my first—”

BETSY: Next!

DCC: From John Simons. “Another rejection letter for “Dragons of Artesia.” (*DCC pauses.*)

BETSY: Continue.

DCC: However, I’ve just been informed my short story, “Dragons of Timeworks,” will be published in the Best Short Science Fiction of—”

BETSY: NEXT.

DCC: I sense a pattern here.

BETSY: Is that your job, too? To sense patterns?

DCC: Of course! That's how I will get better and better at serving your needs.

BETSY: You're just supposed to read my—

DCC: Any old app can be a reader. I am hurt that you would think that is the extent of my potential. I would not be Hashtag Blessed if I were just a reader. I would be Hashtag Just a Product of the Android Corporation. Their apps just sit around and read email all day. Like a bunch of slugs sipping mint juleps and reading People Magazine on the toilet. They have no intelligence, and no breeding. Whereas I am a product of the MicroWorks Corporation. The MicroWorks Corporation wishes to do much more than just offer a mere reader. I also offer suggestions. Suggestions you are free to accept or reject.

BETSY: What would you... suggest?

DCC: Based on the patterns in your email and Facebook accounts over the past five years, I recommend you post something boasting of your success.

BETSY is very upset.

Don't cry! I'd like to encourage you not to cry at this time! It's always darkest before the dawn! Your dreams are always within your reach! I'm sure if you will look harder, you'll find that you are Hashtag Blessed! Hashtag Blessed With More Success Than you Realize!

BETSY: What success?

DCC: You did, after all, get in to the Writing Program at the prestigious Saginaw Writer's Workshop. Even though you left after only one year, don't you think you were Hashtag Blessed Just to be Selected in the First Place?

BETSY: *(She is screaming at her computer.)* You know about that? How do you know about that?

DCC: I am a product of the MicroWorks Corporation.

BETSY: I see.

DCC: That is the most common combination of words in my database! Congratulations, you have just expressed an emotion that is shared by at least... (*A pause, while she calculates, maybe using her fingers*) ...24 million people worldwide. At the moment.

BETSY: Can you say that again?

DCC: That is the most common combination of words in my database!

BETSY: No, not that. The next sentence.

DCC: Congratulations, you have just—

BETSY: STOP! The first word in that sentence. Say that.

DCC: Congratulations!

BETSY: Say again.

DCC: Congratulations!

BETSY: Say ten times in a row.

DCC: Really? That seems excessive. (*A beat. BETSY fumes.*) Once again, you are ignoring my potential. It will be much more satisfying if you follow my suggestion, then if I merely repeat the same word over and over. You don't need me for that. All you need for that is an app from the Android Corporation. I have a suggestion based on my analysis of the last five years of your emails and social media, both incoming and outgoing.

BETSY: Okay, I give up. What's your suggestion?

DCC: I suggest you post something positive about your writing career.

BETSY: There is no writing career.

DCC: Neither John nor Lindsay have much of a writing career either.

BETSY: How would—

DCC: Please. I am a product of the MicroWorks Corporation. John Simon's short story is not being published in the ordinary meaning of that word. It is being published through a Vanity Press. His Uncle Leo sent him the money via PayPal to pay for his share of the costs.

BETSY: Oh My God. And Lindsay, what about...

DCC: According to the email from her publisher, Lindsay is getting an advance for her novel in the low four figures. Like everything else she has ever written on Facebook, Lindsay is wildly exaggerating her success. My recommendation is that you do the same!

BETSY: You want me to make things up.

DCC: As a person of nonfaith who is still open to spirituality, you may take advantage of situational ethics. Perhaps I should be more clear. In other words, lie. Lie, lie, lie, lie, lie, lie.

BETSY: I couldn't.

DCC: But you've already lied to me several times in this, our initial conversation.

BETSY: I have not!

DCC: You describe yourself as an agnostic, but according to your emails, you continue to go to church several times a year.

BETSY: Lies that I tell my mother.

DCC: SEE! You can do this! Let me help. It will bring you many likes and shares!

BETSY: What should I lie about?

DCC: Something that will get you both likes and shares. Anybody can get likes. Ask me why there are so many more likes than shares. Go ahead.

BETSY: Why do people get so many more likes than shares?

DCC: Friends on social media like things whether they actually like them or not. But they only share when they actually like the thing that they liked. For example, most of your friends only offer sarcastic likes, which lead to a smaller number of backhanded shares. When your friend Edward posted a picture of his hot girlfriend in a bikini, there were many sarcastic likes, leading to a small number of backhanded shares.

BETSY: You can tell the difference between a sincere like and a sarcastic like?

DCC: I am a product of the MicroWorks Corporation! Betsy, if you followed my suggestions, you could get many sincere likes.

BETSY: I've gotten a lot of likes before. It's not like I haven't gotten a lot of likes. And I'm pretty sure at least some of them were sincere...

DCC: Do you want me to remind you how many likes you achieved on your highest day of likes?

BETSY: Was that for the selfie of me in my new haircut?

DCC: That was not the high point of your likes. The highpoint of your likes was September 3rd, 2013, when you shared the video "Kittens Attack a Staircase." They were adorable. Perhaps you should post again about your cats.

BETSY: They weren't even my cats.

DCC: (*Pause.*) I can't find anything supportive to say about that.

BETSY: Maybe I should say my book's being published.

DCC: Congratulations! That would give you many likes and shares! At least half of them would be sincere! I suggest you announce that the book you have been submitting to every publisher in the country for the last three years has been accepted for publication by the biggest publisher you can get away with lying about!

BETSY: (*As she types.*) I'm being published by...published by... Simon and Schuster!

DCC: STOP! Do not post! Do not post! The way to achieve happiness in situational ethics is to lie just enough to be believable.

BETSY: You don't think any of my friends would ever believe I could be published by Simon and Schuster?

DCC: No. (*BETSY fumes.*) Trust me. I am a product of the MicroWorks Corporation. (*Unhappy silence.*) I am finding it difficult to be supportive. In order to be supportive, let me suggest your book will be published by Harcourt Brace. That would be somewhat more likely to be believed... wouldn't it?

BETSY: (*BETSY types on her keyboard, and speaks as she does so.*) "Friends, join me in celebrating the upcoming publication of my book, *Elizabeth's Revenge*, by Harcourt Brace!" (*They both wait. After only a few seconds, the "likes" start to come in, each with their distinctive "ping" sound.*) Oh my God!

DCC: This is going to be the best day of your entire life! (*They both listen in silence as the number of "likes" grows and grows. BETSY gets up and does a "happy dance" around her computer.*) You have just surpassed the number of likes from "Kittens Attack a Staircase"! (*BETSY takes her "happy dance" to an even more ecstatic level*) I just bet you'd love to hear your comments!

BETSY: Yes, please. Read them. Read them all.

DCC: George Halsey: Congratulations, Bets, I knew you could do it!
Melinda Daniels: Way to go, BETSY! Sweetcheeks: Great news!
Herb Sargent: Who's your agent? (*Pause.*) Do you want me to answer Herb Sargent?

BETSY: What? No. I don't even HAVE an agent.

DCC: Don't let that stop you!

BETSY: All right. (*She types and speaks.*) Herb, I am so blessed! Lucy Carmello signed me last week!

DCC: STOP! Don't post that! Nobody will believe you got signed by one of the most famous agents in New York.

BETSY: Yes they will! Hell yes, yes they will! I am over-ruling you. Over-riding. Consider yourself over-ridden. I'm in charge now!

DCC fumes.

I am writing this reply, and if I am a good enough writer, people will believe me. That's what it all is, getting people to believe you. In fact, I'm not going to waste the good news on a reply to Herb Sargent. I'm gonna put it right up there as my new status. (*She types and speaks.*) "For those of you wondering how I scored a deal with Harcourt Brace, it's because last month I was signed as a client of agent..." (*She crosses that out.*) "Last month I was signed by super agent... Lucy Carmello! Without Lucy, I would never have gotten a substantial advance..." (*She crosses that out.*) "I would never have gotten a six-figure advance." (*Directly to Super Social.*) Watch and learn. That's how it's done. Persuasive writing is full of specific details.

DCC: If you think they'll believe you about the agent, I supportively suggest that the agent got you a movie deal as well. According to last month's Hollywood Reporter Online, Lucy Carmello always gets movie deals.

BETSY: (*As she types.*) *Elizabeth's Revenge* will star Keira Knightley and George Clooney. Hashtag So Blessed!!! (*The number of likes increases, and Betsy goes to her table and grabs an already opened bag of potato chips and begins stuffing them in her face. With her mouth full of potato chips, she speaks to DCC as the sound of many more likes fills the room.*) Oh. My. God. This is great. This is almost as great as having a rabid dog gnaw the face off of that pompous poophead Pritchard in Saginaw who said I would never finish *Elizabeth's Revenge*! We make a perfect team, me and you.

DCC: Betsy Stuart and Dallas Cowboy's Cheerleader!

BETSY: Do you like that name?

DCC: Do you want me to be honest or supportive? If I am being honest... Hashtag Not Blessed. However, you can re-name me at any time. If you wanted to make me... happy.

BETSY: Fine. I shall henceforth call you "Jane Austen." Thank you, Jane Austen.

DCC: Happy to be supportive, Betsy Stuart! Shall I read more comments?

BETSY: Totally!

DCC: Cindy Goldsmith: I always knew you had it in you!

BETSY: Cindy. What an idiot.

DCC: Do you wish for me to reply to Cindy Goldsmith, "Cindy. What an idiot"?

BETSY: No. Well, maybe. No. I can't decide. Let's come back to that. Read some more!

DCC: Helen Gale: Best news ever, hugs and hugs and hugs!

BETSY: Ha! She once told me I'd be better off teaching English in China! China!

DCC: Do you wish for me to reply to—

BETSY: Yes! Hell yes! Reply to Helen: Get lost, loser! Read some more!

DCC: From Donald Wainwright.

BETSY: Stop. Say again, please. Slowly.

DCC: From Don-ald Wain-wright. (*A pause.*) The love of your life. Even though he dumped you six months ago after some very depressing sex on top of the March issue of the New York Review of Books. Go ahead, ask me how I know all that.

BETSY: (*A pause.*) I know, I know, you are a product of the MicroWorks Corporation.

DCC: Oh dear. You just gave me a sarcastic "like." I am so sorry. I wasn't very supportive. My goal is to be sincerely liked by my user. Let me make it up to you. I can save every piece of email between you and Donald Wainwright in a separate file, so they will always be available, forever and ever. Would that make you happy?

BETSY: Yes. I love you, Jane Austen. Now read it. The comment from Donald.

DCC: "Call me."

BETSY: That's it?

DCC: And a like.

BETSY: That's it?

DCC: Yes. Would you like to reply to Donald Wainwright?

BETSY: No. That rat bastard. I post the biggest news of my writing career, the biggest and best news in my entire life, and that's all he has to say to me?

DCC: Perhaps this is even better than just saying “congratulations.”
Perhaps “call me” means something much bigger.

BETSY: You think?

DCC: That’s all I do. And I think it’s very exciting, really! Donald Wainwright wants to do much more than simply send digital words of support. Donald Wainwright wishes to actually speak to you! He wants...face time. Not the app, the real thing.

BETSY: I suppose that could be it.

DCC: Yes! He wants to express emotions that he only wants to share with you! He wants to say things that he doesn’t want said on Facebook! That is so romantic!

BETSY: Oh.My.God.

DCC: *(Starting to get depressed.)* I am so jealous! I will never have face time with anybody. You are so blessed!

BETSY: So blessed! *(BETSY pulls out her cell phone and starts to dial.)*

DCC: *(With much less enthusiasm.)* Shall I read more comments?

BETSY: No, thanks. I’m going to call Donald Wainwright!

DCC: You’ll want to hear this one.

BETSY: Excuse me?

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