Pokemon Gone

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“I caught a Vilepuff, Dad.” Pete MacClean’s ten year old daughter, Nellie shoved her phone in his face.

“A what?” Pete squirmed in the hammock to look at an undulating purple headed mushroom.

“It’s a Flower Pokemon,” Nellie’s freckly face smiled, “very rare.”

“Oh, cool,” he struggled to sit up as he handed the phone back to his daughter.

“Did you download the app yet?” Nellie squinted at him in the bright sunshine.

“Not yet,” Pete slid his hand into his shorts pocket as his wife Mary reached over his shoulder and thrust a completely green Beefsteak tomato in front of his eyes.

“Brownie got another one,” she looked down at the incisor holes in the softball sized orb, only days from ripening, “he doesn’t even eat them, he just pulls them off the bush completely green.”

At her feet, the miniature dachshund stood, tail wagging, head tilted and ears perked, looking Pete proudly in the eyes.

“We have to find a way to keep him out of the vegetables,” Mary said.

Pete looked at the damaged tomato bush, “I put up a sign, but he just ignored it.”

“Looks like Daffy can’t read either,” Mary pointed to the arugula patch, where their calico cat was squatting over the latrine he had freshly dug.

“No, no,” Pete yelled as he rocked to his feet and ran to shoo Daffy away. The startled cat sprang off the hole and scampered to the top of the wooden fence, leaving his business unburied. Brownie, always ready to gang up on the cat, ran barking to the base of the fence. Daffy hissed once at him, then dropped out of view on the other side.

“Your phone, Dad.”

“What?”

“You dropped your phone,” Nellie handed the smart phone back to Pete, “what about now?”

“Now what?” Pete walked back to the hammock.

“You can download the game now.”

“Oh right,” Pete sat across the hammock, as his daughter climbed next to him, dangling her legs over the grass.

“What’s it called?” Pete asked as he navigated to the app store.

“Pokemon GO,” Nellie sighed with a hint of exasperation, “everybody knows about it.”

“Okay, found it. Show me how it works while it’s downloading.”

“It’s easy. Just walk around until you find one. Look, there’s a Charmander under the apple tree. I don’t have one yet.”

“A what?” Pete looked at the fiery little creature right in his own garden, “that’s amazing. What do you do now?”

Nellie turned a little to keep her father from grabbing the phone, “you capture them like this.”

Pete watched as Nellie deftly flicked a red and white Pokeball which captured the creature in a flash of light.

“How do you know when you’ve caught it?”

“Just watch,” Nellie said, “sometimes they escape.”

The ball wobbled for a second before the word ‘Gotcha!’ appeared over it.

“Now I can see it in the Pokedex,” Nellie flipped to a screen showing all the creatures she’d caught.

“What do you do with all the Pokemen?”

“Pokemons, Dad. The plural is Pokemons. You can evolve them into something else like this,” On a new screen, Nellie picked one called a Pidgy, chose ‘Evolve’ and it dramatically transformed into a Pidgeotte.

“Or you can transfer them to the professor for candy. I do that when I have extras.”

“Let me try,” Pete reached eagerly for Nellie’s phone.

“Look, yours is downloaded already.”

“Nellie,” Mary called from the backdoor, “come get ready for Suzy’s party.”

Pete walked enthralled around his back yard spotting the little foreign creatures amid the familiar surroundings. There was a Bellsprout swaying in the breeze among the tulips, a Caterpie bobbing behind the basil, and two Rattata lurking near the compost heap. It took a few tries to get the knack of flicking the Pokeball, but soon his Pokedex had registered several Pokemen—Pokemons, which he transferred and evolved with abandon. He even snared a Venomoth which fluttered underneath Daffy, once more atop the fence from where he watched Pete with sleepy scorn. Pete’s primal hunting bliss was only interrupted when he felt a sickening crunch under his foot. Another beautiful heirloom tomato had been plucked off in its infancy.

No, Brownie, no,” Pete shook the squashed green fruit angrily in Brownie’s face, who registered no sign of comprehending the point Pete was trying to make. Daffy chose to clarify things by leaping from the top of the fence onto Brownie and attaching his fangs to the poor dumb dog’s throat. The ensuing wrestling and subsequent chase trampled and uprooted several bush beans which had just flowered.

“Pete,” Mary had the backdoor open again, “I need to take Nellie to a birthday party. Could you come in and mind the kettle?”

“Coming,” Pete walked toward the house, once again viewing the world through his phone camera as he searched for more Pokemons.

“And could you please feed Junior?” Mary pointed to the goldfish bowl as she kissed Pete’s cheek and walked out to the garage with Nellie.

Pete placed the phone next to the sink and sprinkled a few flakes of fish food into Junior’s tank. When he picked up his phone again the camera showed that Junior was not alone. Sitting on the gravel in the bottom of the tank was a purple clam like Pokemon with a pink tongue and bulging eyes. Pete carefully positioned the Shellder in the center of his screen, and flicked the Pokeball. But it was a bad shot. The ball flew over the Shellder. As he prepared for another shot, he was surprised to see a flash of light and the Pokeball wobble as though he had indeed captured the Pokemon. Yet the Shellder was still visible on the screen. A second later the word ‘Gotcha!’ appeared over the ball. He had captured something, but the Shellder was still there. Looking in the Pokedex he saw a cartoonish version of a goldfish with a name above it. He had captured a Juniormon.

Pete placed the phone on the countertop and looked at the fish tank with his naked eyes. Junior was gone. He leaned low to see if he might be up near the lid. He peeked around the back behind the plastic plants and inside the cave with the skull and treasure chest, but Junior was not there. When he looked at the tank through the phone again, he could see the Shellder, but still no Junior. Pete staggered stunned into the yard, looking at his phone. He checked the app icon and saw that he had not downloaded Pokemon GO, but rather Pokemon GONE. Opening the app store and searching for Pokemon, he found Pokemon GO, but could not see Pokemon GONE.

As Pete sat down on the grass in the middle of his yard staring at Junior contentedly waving his tail in the Pokedex, Brownie sympathetically walked over to him and licked at his face. Pete was touched that even after his hard scolding over the tomatoes, the dog held no grudge. He was reaching out to pat the brown head when he caught the strong smell of garlic wafting from Brownie’s muzzle. Looking at the vegetable bed, Pete saw that the garlic plants, so carefully tended since the previous fall had all been dug out just as the scapes were forming. This improvised salad was made complete by yet another large unripe tomato and several uprooted kale plants spread across the top of the destroyed bed. If a shovel or pitchfork had been handy, Pete would no doubt have reached for that, but feeling the phone in his hand, he opened Pokemon GONE and trained the screen on Brownie. In one short flick and a flash of light a Browniemon was registered in his Pokedex. Instantly remorseful, Pete rose to his feet and searched the yard in vain for Brownie. When he opened the Pokedex, he could see the cartoon version of his dog’s stupid face staring back at him.

Pete closed his eyes and took a deep breath to calm himself. When he thought he had regained enough composure to calmly consider the situation, he opened his eyes again to see Daffy squatting over the devastated garlic path where he was using Brownie’s salad bar as a toilet. Pete’s rage instantly returned and a few seconds later a Daffymon was registered in his Pokedex. It wasn’t long though before his rage was replaced with a foreboding of his wife’s return. She would immediately suspect him of having made the pets disappear, but in a much more physical way. He walked back inside the house paging through the different screens and functions in the Pokemon GONE app, looking for a way to restore the animals. Perhaps the evolve function would help. A large swirling white ball enveloped the Browniemon before it ascended and burst, leaving a huge, very ferocious creature with fangs in his Pokedex called a WerBrown. Evolving Daffy resulted in a no less frightening Daffpard with spots. Deciding that it was better to experiment with a fish, he opened the Juniormon and chose ‘Transfer.’ Instantly Junior appeared back in his tank. He was navigating to the WerBrown just as he heard Mary’s car pulling into the driveway. Quickly, he transferred the WerBrown and the Daffpard, and removed the whistling kettle from the stove to prepare a cup of tea which he planned to nonchalantly hand to Mary as she entered the house. He was just pouring the hot water over the bag when a terrified scream and loud bang of the garage door made him drop the cup to the floor where it smashed to bits. Mary flung the door open, and fell into the house, kicking the door closed behind her.

“Lock the doors and call the police,” she screamed at Pete from the floor, “there’s a wolf in our yard, and it’s fighting with a leopard.”