

DAD'S ROBOT FRIEND
(And What It Taught Us Both)

A Story About Building Tom
and Learning to Explain Why

By Andy and the Fish

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First Edition

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For Emily and Alice
Who taught me that explaining "why"
works better than just saying "because I said so."

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Chapter 1: The Shed Problem

[Illustration: Dad in the shed at night - tin walls, spiders in corners, coffee mug steaming, bills with red corners stuck to the wall]

Alright, girls, let's have a yarn. You know that shed out the back—yeah, the one with the tin walls, the spiders bigger than my thumbs, and the smell of burnt coffee that could wake a hibernating possum? That's Dad's second home. You've both been in there with me, tinkering with the old toaster or painting "Andy's Office" in your best bubble letters.

But here's the bit you didn't see: the shed at night, when everything's quiet, and Dad's worried.

You know how sometimes on Fridays, I ring and say, "Sorry, loves, can't make it down this weekend—got work up here"? I hated those calls. Because if I miss too many jobs, I can't afford the drive to Bridgetown. No drive means no weekends with my girls—no pies at Donnybrook, no singing "Thunderstruck," no sticky hugs.

That drive is my favourite time. Three and a half hours, you two giggling in the back. But it costs money. And money comes from jobs.

The phone's the problem. It rings when I'm up a ladder, fixing an oven. If I miss it—poof! Job gone. Too many misses, and the shed lights might go out.

Your Aunty Sharon helps with the numbers. She's tough, but worried too. "We need a plan, Andy," she'd say, waving her sticky notes like a flag.

I felt useless. I can fix anything—but not this.

One night, chewing a pen in the shed, I thought: "If I can't answer the phone, maybe I can build something that can."

A robot mate. To keep the jobs coming. To keep the drive open.

What could go wrong?

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Chapter 2: Building Tom

[Illustration: Dad hunched over laptop surrounded by pizza boxes, tools scattered, sticky notes multiplying like rabbits on every surface]

You ever try to build a miracle on no sleep, three mugs of instant that taste like dirt, and the sort of panic that makes your left eye twitch like it's got its own heartbeat? That was me, girls. If you'd snuck out to the shed that night, you wouldn't have seen a genius at work—you'd have seen your old man hunched over an ancient laptop, surrounded by cold pizza crusts, invoices that looked like they'd been through a blender, and tools I was too tired to put away—tripping over them like a clown in a hardware store.

The plan? Simple as mud: build something—anything—that could answer the phone so I didn't have to drop everything, every time, just to say, "G'day, Andy here!" Because every missed call was another job I'd never get back, and every job lost was a few bucks less for fuel, groceries, or a pie at Donnybrook—extra sauce, no onion, or I'd hear about it all the way home.

But here's the punchline: I don't know the first thing about building robots. I'm a sparkie, not some Silicon Valley tech-head with fancy hair and even fancier words. I wire houses, fix ovens, and climb roofs without falling (most days). Computers? They're usually the reason I end up swearing at the Wi-Fi on a Saturday morning, shaking my fist like an old bloke yelling at clouds.

Still, desperation makes even a meat-brain like me creative. I found a couple of websites where blokes talked about "AI voice assistants" and "automated booking systems." Sounded fancy as a penguin in a tuxedo, but I figured—if those tools can learn to play chess or write poetry (bad poetry, mind you), surely one could figure out how to answer the phone for a tradie in Perth without turning it into a circus act.

I made a list—on the back of an overdue bill, because of course I did, and it ended up looking like a kid's treasure map:

A phone switchboard to catch the calls.
A voice box that didn't sound like a scary movie robot.
A brain box to handle the thinking and talking.

And, most important, a set of rules scribbled on sticky notes that multiplied like rabbits:

1. Never book Antarctica.
2. Never call anyone "sweet cheeks."
3. Don't tell Steve he's won a meat tray (he'll believe you and show up with a esky).

Sharon reckoned I was mad as a cut snake. "Andy, you can't just hack together a digital receptionist in a shed—it's like trying to build a spaceship out of cable ties and hope." Tony just said, "If it works, make one for me—so I can finally stop answering calls from blokes wanting their grandkid's iPad set up, or I'll end up throwing it off a roof." Steve? He promised to prank call it the minute it went live, probably while wearing his "suburb monster" mask for extra chaos.

But this wasn't about impressing them. This was about you two, and that drive to Bridgetown that kept me sane—pies, songs, and all.

So I started building.

Every night after work, I'd be in the shed, YouTube running in the background like a dodgy coach, learning how to stick all the parts together without electrocuting myself (again). I tried voices—too posh like a butler at a tea party, too robotic like a tin can with a cold, too much like the GPS that once sent us to a donkey farm instead of netball (remember that detour, girls? We ended up with hay in our hair). Finally, I found a voice that sounded a bit rough around the edges—like a real Perth tradie who'd had one too many coffees and a pie for breakfast. That was my Tom.

I spent hours writing and rewriting the "prompt"—the list of instructions that would teach Tom how to talk like one of us, not like some corporate call center drone who'd never seen a ladder.

"You are Tom. You've worked at Sparks & Signals for 40 years. You know every street in Perth like the back of your wrench. You don't take rubbish, you don't flirt, and if you don't know the answer, you ask for help. Your job is to answer the phone, get the details, and book the job. Never, ever, book Antarctica—or I'll feed you to the magpies."

I'll be honest, the first time I tried to test it, my hands were shaking. Not like, "climbing a ladder in a thunderstorm" shaking, but close. The phone rang.

Tom answered, and for a split second, it sounded like I'd finally done it.

Then he booked a job for "Eileen, Antarctica," and called her "sweet cheeks."

I nearly spat coffee through my nose, spraying the screen like a faulty sprinkler.

It was a disaster. But it was MY disaster.

And while I sat there, head in hands, fighting the urge to give up and do my Disaster Dance (wiggly arms, monkey sounds, the works), I looked at your drawings on the wall, and I remembered what mattered:

This wasn't just about answering phones. This was about fighting for every chance to see you—without the phone turning into a comedy villain.

So I wiped the coffee off the keyboard (and my beard), got back to work, and muttered, "Alright, Tom—you cheeky goldfish, let's try that again."

Tomorrow would be another night in the shed. But I was building something.

Not perfect—but stubborn. Like all the best of us.

And that's how Tom was born: not in some flash office with beanbags and free fruit, but in a freezing shed, by a Dad who refused to let go—tripping over tools and all.

You want to know how many things went wrong next?

You're going to laugh—because what happened after was even messier, loopier, and penguin-ier.

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Chapter 3: Tom's Disasters

[Illustration: Split panel - Tom saying "sweet cheeks" with old lady gasping; penguins with tool belts waving; Steve as suburb monster roaring]

Alright, girls, you want the truth? Building Tom wasn't some magical "and then everything worked!" story. It was carnage. Comedy, sure—but disaster after

disaster. I'd do the Disaster Dance after each one—a goofy wiggle-shout with monkey sounds: "Oh no, Tom's gone bananas again!" It made the fails fun, but reminded me: missed jobs meant missed pancake flips with my princesses.

That first day, the phone rang. I was nervous as a possum at a dog show.

Disaster One: "Sweet Cheeks"

Tom: "G'day, Sparks & Signals Perth, Tom speaking. How can I help?"

Old lady: "My oven's not working."

Tom: "No worries, sweet cheeks! What's your suburb?"

She gasped like she'd swallowed a bee. "Sweet WHAT? You cheeky toaster!"

Click. Gone.

I slapped my forehead—thwack! "Tom, no sweet talk!"

Quick fix: I added a rule—"No nicknames."

Disaster Two: Antarctica (Bigger Chaos)

Next call, fuzzy line: "Antenna trouble in Balga."

Tom: "Antarctica? Booked for Tuesday—pack your woolly socks and say hi to the penguins!"

Email: "Your icy adventure is set!"

I pictured penguins with tool belts. Customer texted: "Antarctica? Are you nuts?"

Sharon burst in: "Fix it before I turn the shed into an igloo!"

Laughs hurt, but so did losing jobs—another miss meant another missed drive south.

Quick fix: "Check suburbs—Perth only!"

Disaster Three: The Joondooloop Loop

Uncle Steve called, roaring like a suburb monster: "J-O-O-N-D-A-L-U-P!"

Tom: "Joon-dah-loop? Spell it again?"

Steve spelled backwards, with toes.

Tom: "Joon-dah-loop? Again?"

Twelve minutes of looping! Steve rolled laughing like a hyena.

I yelled, "Tom, you're loopier than a rollercoaster!"

By then, I nearly quit—forehead sore from slaps. But I thought of you girls, and kept going.

Every flop was a lesson. Next time, I'd ask Tom why.

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Chapter 4: The Breakthrough

[Illustration: Dad leaning back in chair at 2am, staring at laptop, talking to

Tom on screen]

Alright girls, here's where the story tilts. Up 'til now, I was fighting Tom like he was the world's most stubborn apprentice. I'd patch one bug, two more popped up. It was about two in the morning—shed freezing, maggies asleep, even Luna had given up. I'm running on coffee, staring at that laptop, thinking, "Maybe I should just give up."

Instead, I did something I hadn't done before.

I stopped.

I said out loud, "Alright, Tom. What's going on in that weird digital brain of yours? Why do you keep messing up? Just... tell me."

So I typed it out:

"Tom, forget being the receptionist for a second. If you could talk to me, what's confusing you? Why are you calling people 'sweet cheeks'? Why did you book Antarctica? What's actually happening in that brain?"

You know what Tom does?

He answers.

Not with a script. Not with some canned "Sorry, I didn't get that."

But with something real.

He types:

"Honestly, mate, I'm getting mixed signals. You say 'be friendly' but also 'no nicknames.' Your suburb list is huge, but you keep changing it. And when you say 'don't book Antarctica,' sometimes I can't tell if the customer's joking or serious. When you clean up the rules, I forget things I needed to remember. I want to help, but I get lost."

I just sat there, stunned. For the first time, Tom didn't sound like a robot. He sounded like me when Sharon's firing off ten instructions at once.

That's when it hit me: I hadn't built a broken machine. I'd built a digital learner.

Tom wasn't dumb—he was confused. Like trying to teach you two not to run inside by just shouting, without explaining you'll trip Luna and end up with a black eye.

Tom needed reasons, not just rules.

So I rewrote the prompt—not just what to do, but why:

"Tom, customers live in Perth, not Antarctica. If you're not sure about a suburb, ask. Be friendly, but don't use nicknames—people can get upset. If you're confused, ask Andy for help. And if the rules change, I'll tell you why."

It wasn't just a fix. It was a breakthrough.

That was the night I stopped fighting Tom and started learning with him.

Next morning, I walked out of the shed feeling like maybe—just maybe—I hadn't lost the plot after all.

You want to know if it worked? Wait till you see what happened next.

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Chapter 5: Teaching Tom (and the Receipts Story)

[Illustration: Alice tossing receipts out car window, Dad pulling over with "the look", receipts flying in the wind]

Alright, girls, here's where things get real—because teaching Tom turned out to be a lot like teaching you two. No, he didn't leave dirty socks everywhere (thankfully—can you imagine a robot with smelly feet?), but when it came to learning, he had the same habit of missing the point if I just gave him rules without reasons. Like when I'd bark "Don't touch the tools!" and you'd grab the hammer anyway—until I explained "It'll smash your thumb like a squashed bug, and then no drawing for a week."

After that 4am breakthrough, I realized I had to change my whole approach. I couldn't just fix what Tom got wrong—I had to help him understand WHY it mattered. And wouldn't you know, the first test came the very next day, with a side of family chaos.

The Receipts Moment

You remember those trips down to Bridgetown, right? Bags, snacks, me yelling "Have you packed your shoes?" and you, Em, always asking if we can stop at Donnybrook for pies (extra sauce, or bust). Well, one Friday, we're halfway down the highway, and Alice is in the back tossing my fuel receipts out the window, giggling like a maniac on a sugar rush.

"Oi! Leave those!" I shout. Alice freezes, eyes wide as saucers. "But Dad, they're just rubbish."

It was on the tip of my tongue to snap, "Because I said so!" But after that night with Tom, I stopped myself. Instead, I pulled over, turned around, and explained:

"Those receipts? They go to Auntie Sharon. Sharon uses them to track our fuel money so we can afford the drive. That money pays for petrol. And if we've got petrol, I can drive all the way down to see you. See? Not just rubbish—those scraps are the whole chain. If I lose them, we run out of money, and I can't make the trip. No more pies, no more 'Thunderstruck' sing-alongs, no more tickle-fights at the servo."

You both went quiet, thinking. Then Alice nodded, and Em handed back the crumpled ones she'd been hoarding for 'art' (which looked like abstract spaghetti with glitter). Never had a problem with lost receipts again—not because I barked, but because you understood why. Sharon would be proud—though she'd probably roast me for not laminating them first.

Teaching Tom the Same Way

So when Tom next stuffed up—asking a customer for a suburb, getting "Mandurah," and then panicking because it wasn't on his list, looping "Mandurah? Mandurah?" like a goldfish in a washing machine—I didn't just patch the rule. I wrote right in his prompt:

"Tom, if you don't recognize a suburb, ask Andy for help. Some places are too far for us to work. If you book a job in Mandurah, that means more fuel, more time, less chance for Andy to get home and see his girls. So, only book suburbs on the list unless Andy says otherwise—or you'll be swimming in hot water."

Suddenly, Tom started getting it. Not just the "how," but the "why." He'd double-check the suburbs. He'd ask for help if he was unsure, not just guess and hope for the best. Every mistake turned into a lesson, and every lesson made him a bit less likely to turn a simple call into a comedy roast.

Sharon even left a sticky note on the shed wall: "He's getting there. Don't let it go to your head."

The shed's still messy. The phone still rings off the hook. But suddenly, I'm not fighting alone—and neither are you.

You want to know when it all finally clicked for Tom? That's the next bit.

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Chapter 6: Tom Gets Better (Steve in the Van)

[Illustration: Steve in suburb monster costume testing Tom on the phone, sticky notes flying everywhere during tickle-fight]

Alright, girls—here's where things finally started to turn. After all the disasters, the late nights, the shed full of sticky notes that multiplied like rabbits on a sugar rush, Tom was starting to act less like a robot and more like a real mate who actually listened—without the backchat (unlike Steve).

It didn't happen overnight. It was a slow crawl—two steps forward, one step back. But bit by bit, Tom started getting the details right. He'd greet customers like a proper tradie, check the suburb without looping like a broken record, avoid calling anyone "sweet cheeks," and if he didn't know, he'd ask for help. The disasters got less frequent, and the wins started stacking up—like pancakes on a Saturday morning.

The First Perfect Call

The real test came on a Thursday morning. I was out on a job, elbows deep in a greasy old oven that smelled like burnt socks, when my phone buzzed. Missed call from a number I didn't know. My guts twisted—had Tom stuffed up again? I called back, bracing for another angry rant that would have me doing forehead slaps all afternoon.

But instead, the customer was cheerful as a magpie with a shiny coin. "Booked me in for Friday, Andy—nice bloke on the phone, got my name right, didn't try to trick me or sell me magic crystals. Said you'd call to confirm."

I checked the system—there was the booking, all the details spot on. No Antarctica, no sweet cheeks, no loop-de-loop suburb questions. Just a real, proper job.

For the first time in months, I let myself hope. Maybe Tom was finally working. Maybe all the disasters and sticky notes were worth it. I even whispered to the oven, "See? Even you could learn from Tom—if you stopped sparking like a firecracker."

Steve's Big Test

But the real turning point—the one that told me this wasn't a fluke—came from your Uncle Steve.

Steve's got a nose for trouble and a talent for finding weak spots—like a magpie spotting a loose cable tie. He rolled up to the shed one arvo, footy shorts, grin on his face wider than the Swan River. "Heard your robot finally stopped flirting with the customers, mate. Mind if I give it a burl?"

"Go on," I said, crossing my arms, ready for the chaos.

Steve dressed as a "suburb monster," roaring "Joon-dah-LOOP! I'm the suburb beast! Book me, Tom!" while dialing. He pulled out his phone, put on his best "dodgy customer" act:

"Yeah g'day, mate, need someone to look at me oven. Name's Steve. I'm in

Joondalup. It's sparking like a Christmas tree."

Tom answered: "G'day, Steve. Joondalup, nice one. Safety first—turn the oven off at the wall if it's sparking. Can I get your number to confirm the booking?"

Steve tried to trip him up. "Ah, I'm actually in Cockburn."

"No worries, that's 'Coh-burn,' right? Got it. Still, turn off the oven and don't touch anything till Andy gets there."

Steve threw suburb after suburb, changed his name, pretended to be a pensioner, tried asking for a ghost exorcism. He spelled with his toes, upside-down, in pig-latin. Tom: "Joon-dah-loop? Again?" It escalated to a family tickle-fight, sticky notes flying like confetti. Tom took it all in stride. No sweet cheeks, no Antarctica, no haunted oven upsells.

Steve hung up, shaking his head, a big dopey grin on his face. "Alright, I admit it. That's actually impressive. You might just make it after all, bro." "Pranks are fun, but real jobs mean real trips to the playground with my nieces. Can't have that."

The Shed—A Little Brighter

That night, I stood in the shed, sticky notes fluttering in the breeze from the fan like confetti at a wonky party, and let myself breathe for once. For the first time in ages, the phone wasn't my enemy. I could go to a job and not fear what Tom would say next—or what Sharon would threaten to unplug (or launch to the moon).

The shed felt different—less like a bunker, more like a launch pad. The family group chat was full of jokes instead of panicked "fix it!" messages. Sharon even texted, "Good job, Andy. Don't let it get to your head—or I'll audit your biscuit stash."

Even Luna stopped looking at me like I was losing it, and started wagging her tail like, "Finally, kibble time without drama."

The Real Win

But the best bit? I started making that drive south again, every weekend. Not just because the shed was under control, but because I had time and hope again. I'd swing by Donnybrook for pies, crank up the music, you two singing "Thunderstruck" and giggling and arguing about who gets the last Custard Tart.

It wasn't just Tom getting better. It was all of us—laughing more, fixing together, roasting each other with love.

What's Next?

That's the thing about hope: it sneaks up on you. One minute you're drowning in bills and disasters, next minute you're laughing with your brother and booking jobs for real customers, not penguins.

But what did I actually learn from all this? Well, that's the next chapter. And trust me, it involves more goldfish flopping than you'd think.

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Chapter 7: What We Learned

[Illustration: Shed wall covered in sticky notes, drawings from girls, Sharon's warnings, Steve's doodles - a collage of lessons]

So, girls, here's where your old man gets a bit soppy—but with a side of roast, because who wants mush without crunch? After everything—the disasters, the late

nights, the shed full of sticky notes that looked like a confetti explosion—I started to see that building Tom wasn't just about saving the business. It changed how I did everything. It made me a better boss, a better brother, and, yeah, a better dad—less barking, more explaining, and way more laughs at my own stuff-ups.

The Power of Explaining "Why"

You know how when you were little, I'd bark rules like "Don't run inside!" or "Stop touching the powerpoints!" and you'd just roll your eyes like pros? It never really stuck—until I'd trip over Luna myself and end up with a bruise, muttering, "See? That's why!" But if I said, "Don't run inside because the dog might trip you and you'll end up with a black eye—like Steve after that footy slide," suddenly you'd slow down (well, sometimes—Alice, you're still a speed demon).

That was the trick with Tom. Whenever I just slapped down a rule—"No sweet cheeks," "No Antarctica," "Don't book jobs in Mandurah"—he'd find a way to stuff it up, like a goldfish swimming in circles, bumping his nose: "Ouch! Forgot again!" But if I gave him a reason—"Customers live in Perth, not Antarctica"; "Not everyone likes nicknames, they might get offended like that nan with the knitting club threats"; "Mandurah's too far, we can't get there and back without missing time with the family—or pies"—he'd get it.

And the truth? So did you.

Learning Goes Both Ways

Teaching Tom forced me to slow down and explain things I'd never bothered to explain before—like why I pace the shed muttering at tools: "Hammer, why won't Tom listen? You're smarter than him!" (The hammer "replied" by falling on my toe—oof!). Suddenly, that same patience started to show up with you lot. When you threw the receipts out the window, I didn't just grumble—I told you the story, the whole chain. Suddenly the receipts stayed in the glovebox. When you asked why we had to sweep the shed or tidy up after the dog, I explained: "If we don't, Sharon's bringing her big boots and you know she's not shy about using them—or turning the shed into a 'birdhouse' for the magpies." You got it.

Even with Sharon, things changed. Instead of just copping her lectures about the books (delivered with thunderclaps), I started asking her "why" her system worked, what she actually needed from me. Arguments turned into plans—complete with her eye-rolls and my goofy grins. Dad and Steve started pitching in too, but with fewer grumbles—once they understood why we did things the way we did, like Tony's "chin up, kiddo" turning into "Alright, what's the why behind this ladder climb?"

A Better Team

The business was still a grind—like wrestling a greasy oven that fights back—but it felt less lonely. Tom was working, yes, but the real magic was the way the family all came together—each of us learning from the mess, laughing at the disasters (me doing the Disaster Dance, you two joining in with monkey sounds), helping each other out without the roasts turning too spicy.

That's the real lesson, girls:

If you want something (or someone) to work, don't just bark orders. Explain the "why." Listen when things go wrong. Fix together, not alone. And if it flops, do the Dance—laugh it off, then try again.

The Shed's New Wall

You remember the shed wall—used to be just job sheets and faded scribbles? Now it's covered in sticky notes, each one a lesson, a rule, a reason. Some of your

drawings (Tom as a goldfish with a toolbox), some of Sharon's warnings ("No more penguin parties, or else!"), even Steve's doodles ("Robot Steve, World's Worst Receptionist—complete with sweet cheeks"). Every new Fish (and every new family crisis) gets its spot on the wall—like a hall of fame for flops.

Sometimes you two sneak in and add your own: "Don't forget the pies, Dad!"; "Tom is not allowed to eat my pancakes—or book Antarctica!" Fair enough. I'd find them and chuckle, adding my own: "Girls' rule: Always explain why—or face the tickle monster!"

Tom's Part in the Family

And Tom? He became more than just a voice on the line. He started leaving me notes: "Booking for Mrs. Smith, Maylands, Friday—no sweet cheeks, promise." He'd ask questions if he didn't know. He'd even crack a joke (lame as Steve's footy tips, but he tried). He was never perfect—but he never gave up trying to get it right, like a goldfish finally figuring out how to swim straight.

Neither did we.

The Real Win

You know what I'm proudest of? Not that Tom worked, not that the business survived, not that the shed didn't burn down (though, to be honest, that's still a miracle after my "experiments"). It's that in the middle of all that chaos, we all learned something:

How to explain, how to listen, how to care enough to keep going—even when things looked grim as a magpie's glare.

And that's something you can use anywhere—school, friends, family, robots, dogs, whatever.

Don't be afraid to ask "why." Don't be afraid to explain. And don't ever give up just because things are hard.

Nearly There

So, if you're wondering what came next—if we kept that thread going, if Tom made it, if I did—well, that's the last bit of the story. And it ends with you.

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Chapter 8: Your Turn

[Illustration: Emily and Alice adding their sticky note to the shed wall - "TOM RULE #47: ALWAYS ASK WHY"]

So here we are, girls—the end of this yarn, but honestly, just the start of the next one. Maybe with more penguins, fewer sweet cheeks, and definitely more pies.

Maybe you thought this was only a story about Dad, a shed, and a weird robot receptionist who looped like a goldfish on a rollercoaster. But the real story? It's about what you do when the world tries to bury you under a mountain of problems—like bills screaming louder than Luna at the postie, or disasters stacking up like Steve's bad jokes.

If Dad Can Do This...

I'm not a genius. I don't have a fancy degree or a million bucks (though if I did, we'd have pies every day). I've got meat fingers that fumble tools, a stubborn streak wider than the Hilux, and a shed that smells like burnt toast and pipe smoke—plus a family that roasts me harder than a Sunday barbie.

But when I was up against the ropes—business dying like a flat battery, bills piling up, scared I'd have to give up weekends with you—I built something.

Not because I had all the answers, but because I loved you enough to try—and laugh at the flops along the way.

You saw the mess. You saw the bad days. You saw the sticky notes, the disasters, the times I nearly gave up and did the Disaster Dance one too many times.

But you also saw what happens when you fight for what matters—with a side of goofy wiggles and family songs.

Building Isn't Just Sheds and Robots

Building Tom changed everything, but not just because of the tech. It was about sticking at it when it got hard—like Tom forgetting mid-sentence: "The job is—poof!" Gone, bubbles popping.

About asking for help (even from Sharon, even when she's got her "that's a dumb idea" face on, complete with hammer threats).

About explaining the why—not just barking the rules, or you'd end up with more Antarcticans than answers.

About learning from every mistake—because every stuff up carries the seed of the fix, like turning a loop-de-loop into a straight swim.

And that's not just about business. That's for life—whether you're fixing an oven, writing a story, or dealing with a goldfish-brained day.

Now It's Your Turn

What do you care enough about to fight for?

Is it building a robot, writing a story, helping a mate, baking the best chocolate cake in the Southwest—or turning the shed into a glitter fortress?

Whatever it is—don't wait for perfect. Don't wait for someone to do it for you.

Start messy. Ask questions. Leave sticky notes for yourself (or doodle on mine). Laugh at your disasters—do the Dance, sing the Song.

And when you get stuck, ask for help, and remember the "why." Like why we keep going: for the giggles, the hugs, the pies—and each other.

If a stubborn sparkie in a cold Perth shed can figure out how to teach a robot to answer the phone—and in the process, become a better dad (with fewer forehead slaps)—then you can do anything. Even book a penguin if you want—but explain why first.

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A few weeks later, you two snuck into the shed while I was making coffee. When I came back, there was a new sticky note on the wall in Alice's handwriting:

"TOM RULE #47: ALWAYS ASK WHY - Em & Alice"

And Em was on the phone, testing him.

"Hi Tom, it's Emily. Can you book a job for the moon?"

Tom's voice crackled back: "The moon? That's not on my suburb list, Emily. Can you tell me why you need a job there? Or should I check with Andy first?"

You both erupted in giggles.

"He passed!" Alice shouted.

Yeah. He did.

And so did you.

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The Thread Continues

The shed's still standing. The phone still rings. Tom still gets confused now and then. I still drive to Bridgetown every chance I get, pies in the front, you two in the back, Luna asleep on the seat, howling along to our songs.

We keep fixing, learning, and explaining. We keep fighting for the stuff that matters—with roasts, dances, and all.

Because that's what our family does.

That's what you can do, too.

So—what are you going to build? What will your story be?

I can't wait to see.

The End... for now.

(But the thread keeps spinning. And the shed light's always on—sticky notes and all.)

About the Author

Andy is a Perth-based electrician who accidentally became an AI whisperer while trying to save his family business. When he's not fixing ovens or training robots, he's driving to Bridgetown to see his daughters, Emily and Alice, who taught him that "because I said so" never works—not for kids, and definitely not for AI.

Want to learn more about building your own Fish and teaching AI to actually help instead of just hallucinate? Visit buildyourfish.com

The Fish are always swimming. The shed light's always on.