Gifting

Arnold, 80, loved giving gifts. His children and grandchildren lived in other cities, so they had to receive gifts by mail, not in person. He sold his greeting card company while he still could—in this new age, he lost business to email gift cards. People used to purchase a card or gift by going to stores and judging items, picking them up, feeling them. Now, to purchase gifts, Arnold often went on the internet. True, he saw only photos, had to guess what the actual gift was like to touch.

For Arnold, the new age was science fiction. You ordered something you never touched, within days it was magically in a box at your front door. Could he avoid this anonymous, hands-off acquiring of gifts?

He could hire people, tell them what he wanted, have them go out and return with samples—but that was expensive, time consuming, still impersonal. Or he could journey to the Alternate Dimension, where shops had far more variety–but the trip was expensive and the occasional traveller did not return (the company stated they remained because they enjoyed the Alternate Dimension–but there was no proof, it was another dimension.) Astral Projection into good stores around the world was possible–but required years of training. Only the internet was now…required little training…cost nothing to use.

But choosing the proper gift was delicate, an art form. Photos were never enough, never a substitute for picking up whatever it was, smelling it, feeling it. Arnold had an idea for new software and invested in it. Then he took the developed software to computer manufacturers, offering it for a modest free. When the computers were on sale, Amazon and thousands of other sites adopted it.

Arnold sat at his desk, turned on his new computer, went on Amazon and opened the pages featuring flowers. He clicked on a rose bouquet. The flat image rose from his computer screen and it morphed into a 3D, full-sized holographic image. When he touched the flowers, he felt the petals. He enjoyed the roses’ rich aroma. For the discerning gifter, Arnold’s creation was perfect.

Arnold developed troubling concerns that his creation was somehow not…ethical. That it was a cheat, the easy way out. People could now sit in holographic chairs, to see how comfy they were. They sat in a holographic version of a new car and played with dashboard gadgets. It seemed like the real thing—but Arnold knew it wasn’t. Did that make a difference?

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Arnold took an image of himself and created a full-sized hologram. He looked at it for a long time, wanting to ask it questions. All it could do was smile.

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