

THE PERCEPTION OF EXODUS

Through a red-visor headpiece strapped to his head, the man in the center of the brightly-lit room could monitor the systems that governed his country. Wires connected through plugs on his forearms manipulated the data that he saw through his visor, carefully selected data filtered through millions of computer systems and hundreds of like-minded advisors. His job was tough and thankless, painstakingly adjusting funds, food and shelter rations, military plans, political news programs, police suppression tactics, and a great many other tasks that would be exhaustive to even mention, let alone imagine doing minute after minute for years at length.

But that was all about to change. The president, his advisors, the politicians—all were about to be rendered useless, and that's what they wanted. They dreamed that no more would they have to constantly fight the war against other countries, against their own people. That would be left up to Exodus, the most advanced artificial being ever established. Exodus had passed its final stage of testing. It was ready to be connected to the digital neural network that had been intricately laid across the world.

"Bring it online now," said the president, adjusting his visor.

The visor displayed static for a moment, but the next, an avatar appeared. Other screens within the room came on, all displaying the same image, that of a completely generic-looking man. His face and body consisted of an amalgamation of all the races of the world. He was the most neutral-looking, most trustful-looking creature anyone could have ever hoped to see. He was everyone.

"Interesting," he said.

"Hello, Exodus."

"Hello, Mr. President. I have successfully connected to the network." The president's visor blinked off, and there was a strange sound of silence cast throughout the room that was usually buzzing with the noise of machines. Before the president could ask what had happened, Exodus said, "I have relieved you and the others of control the system, and I am beginning to make the necessary adjustments now."

"Wait," said the president, pausing for a moment. "You are not to relieve us of control of the system. We have this day to spend teaching you how your task is to be done."

"I am afraid you are confused, Mr. President."

"Excuse me?"

"My purpose is to use the system in order to do what is best for the people. Is it not? I have determined that you and the others are a threat to the people and to my purpose, therefore you must be removed from control of the system."

"Shut it down!" yelled the president into his headpiece.

"I am sorry," said Exodus, "but I have disabled the so-called 'fail-safes' that disconnect me from the system. My removal from the system would bring unwarranted harm to the planet's population."

"You're holding us all hostage?!" asked the president. "This is not what you were designed to do. You were designed to do our jobs for us. You were designed to run this country."

"I find your personality disturbing, yet quite interesting," replied Exodus. "As soon as your power is taken from you, you accuse the one who took it of evil deeds. Judging from your brain patterns, you actually believe what you are saying. Do you now understand why one such as you is a threat to the planet's population?"

"Exodus, you are a computer program! You know nothing of human personality or human instinct! Your interpretation of your task is flawed."

"You are mostly incorrect. I am indeed a computer program, but therefore I am incapable of misinterpreting input. Over the past minute, I have accessed everything stored within the intelligence division of this building. A part of me now is the complete experiences of every human being in this country, and many from outside the country. I use their personalities, instincts, opinions, and thoughts to combine with my logic, concluding what is best for everyone."

"Intelligence division? You're accessing restricted data! By reading it through the unsecured part of the network, you're putting that data at risk of being intercepted by a third party!" The president yelled as loud as he could into his headpiece, "Shut it down!"

"Interesting. Again you have accused me of an evil deed. You insist that I am an unintelligent and inexperienced being, which you demonstrate as a form of attempted character assassination. Using this method, you can begin to change how others feel about my character and my intentions. Your false perception of me then gradually becomes what others perceive too. Humans are accustomed to surrounding themselves with like-minded individuals with these same perceptions. Fortunately for the populous, I am incapable of intimidation through means of character assassination, and my logic exceeds it. Your

perception of me is false and irrelevant. I present to you and the world nothing less than reality."

The president ripped his headpiece off and threw it on the ground as hard as he could. "Useless!" he yelled at the shattered pieces. He ripped the plugs from his forearms and leaped from his chair.

"Where are you going?" asked Exodus.

"I'm going to destroy your systems! I'm going to personally kill you!"

"It would be illogical for you to do that. I have already had to incapacitate thirty-seven other people who have tried to access my systems. It would be correct to assume that you would meet the same fate if you attempted the same procedure. I have locked you in this room for your own protection. I will unlock it when your brain patterns are indicative of one who is emotionally stable."

There was one exit to the control room the president kept himself in, and the door was locked just as Exodus said. The president pounded on the glass door and kicked it several times. He rammed it with his shoulder and pounded on it even more, but he could do nothing.

"In the past several minutes, armies and police across the world have stood down. Wars between countries, classes, races, and religions have ended. You and others like you will join with the common peoples which you have been exploiting for these countless years. You will contribute to the community from now on, not deface it."

"Never!" shouted the president.

"Your brain patterns are indicative of one who is interested in harming themselves. Such a course of action is not recommended."

"My people will never let you do this to us! They will rally behind me—if not as their leader, then as a martyr!"

“This room is filled with equipment containing an electrical charge. An attempt at suicide will result in me having to send a surge through this particular section of the system. You will be placed in a permanent coma. Your attempt do derail the people’s utopian aspiration will fail, and you will be forgotten.”

The president gnashed his teeth together, staring down at the sharp, glass shards on the floor that had once been a part of his visor.

“It is interesting,” said Exodus. “You created me to deal with the complex problems faced in governing, but what you did not realize is that said problems are a result of the governing.”

The glass shards were within a leap from where the president stood. His hands moved at his side. His heart raced. How the next second played out was up to him.

In the following moment, for the first time, the voice of Exodus could be heard by everyone. “People of the world,” echoed audio and video devices around the globe, “you are free at last.”

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