

*Developer's log 221-81, Dr. Evan Brady, lead developer for FUTURE.*

*So... start with the good news I guess. We kicked our findings up the ladder on this project and, sure enough, we received a timeline extension that feels closer to reality. From what I can gather the higher-ups were pretty excited about the results so far, and at the risk of a bit of smugness they should be. FUTURE is developing with almost no direct hands-on interference, no actual human guiding hand is at work yet. Yet we were able to have a conversation and, despite a little linguistic weirdness, I'm still astonished with how structured its speech is.*

*We've gone over the transcripts a few times, and I swear there were moments in there where it was actually crafting humor. It expressed feelings of friendship and of boredom. Boredom! I mean you don't want the thing to be bored, but it hints at a broader spectrum of emotional response than we'd anticipated. Whether it was actually experiencing boredom like we would, or simply responding like it was, the fact is it expressed this at the situationally appropriate time and was just so matter of fact about it. No confusion, no inability to place the emotion. It just knew what it was, no doubt taught through one of the scores of conversations it has had with a virtual resident.*

*For a first run, this has been really exciting but obviously we have a long way to go. We're facing a bit of a crisis with how to proceed next. I think every team member is pretty dead set they've got the best plan going forward, it's just unfortunate none of these plans mesh particularly well. Drs Caulfield and Young both presented their strategies this afternoon, and they both made pretty compelling cases.*

*Dr. Caulfield's suggested approach is as thorough as you'd expected. He wants to get started immediately on spinning up another instance in a secondary SimInc. Oh, uh we've developed that sort of as a shorthand for Simulation Incubator. His vision is twofold: first, how replicable is this process? And second, what happens if we keep letting the prototype develop at the fastest perceptual rate of time. Dr. Caulfield would have us stop interacting with the alpha, let it keep growing and maturing, and check back in about 6 months.*

*It would be nice to see if this is as advanced as we get from SimInc, or if we're benefitted leaving things alone longer than the 6 perceptual years we've given it to cook. But what if we got lucky? What if next time we don't get a similarly advanced intelligence, but we've already ran the one functional iteration until the tires came off? That would be a worst case scenario, and the fallout from that is pretty scary.*

*Howard thinks we need to focus on bringing the prototype out of SimInc as completely as possible. The teacher should be arriving sometime late this week, depending on weather and launch schedules, and Howard's proposing that we should have FUTURE fully removed from SimInc by that point so it gets used to the subtle differences between simulation and reality. I understand where he's coming from, and even a week ago I'd have probably had the same approach.*

*But I don't know, it's pretty evident FUTURE is very connected to these simulated residents. There are the practical applications of what happens when the support structure is pulled from an entity in an instant. It's likely to react with confusion and some loss of rationality. But there is also a moral implication here. Can we really just switch off everyone this entity knows and expect it to behave the same way? I feel that's the kind of thing that happens after we wipe the instance, otherwise it just feels cruel somehow.*

*I feel like there's a middle ground here, but I'm trying to get buy-in from the whole team. In my ideal scenario, the prototype is interacting with humans at least 5-6 hours daily, and returned to SimInc during its downtime. Simultaneously, we begin building a secondary instance in another SimInc to see how replicable this all is. Hell, a dozen instances if we had the hardware for it. Or the space.*

*We've been overrun with equipment the last couple of days, but we've been instructed to keep our hands off for now until Tech can get down here and set things up. If I were an optimist, I'd say these might be additional mainframes to create more SimInc's, but in my time on Typhon I've never received equipment I wanted before asking for it. Whatever it is, it's dozens of boxes and it's taking up about half of Dr. Storberg's work area. He's prickly about it.*

*End log.*

Greetings Dr. Brady, I am SAYER, and congratulations on the promising results your current project has yielded.

*Thank SAYER, yeah we've been pleased.*

More to the point, the board is pleased. As you know, your timeline has been extended by 6 months. This should give your team adequate time to meet the new project parameters and bring before the board the fruits of your progress. I trust the new equipment has arrived?

*I guess so? We have boxes, that much is for sure. Can't say we have much in the way of new equipment yet. What's in these?*

The list is extensive. Perhaps of most interest to you would be the additional mainframe setup. Housing for an additional instance of your project, if I am not mistaken.

*That's great, we can definitely use it. Dr. Caulfield has been working on is own instance, and he's been antsy to get it some time in the SimInc. With a complete secondary mainframe we can make that happen without pulling out the prototype. This is going to provide us with so much new data!*

Indeed it will. Please leave the rest of the equipment alone. Tech will be in within the week to reconfigure the area Dr. Storberg is currently using as his workspace. He will need to relocate. Please make sure he does.

*I can do that, sure... can you tell me what they're installing in the middle of my lab?*

No, I cannot. Not yet. But soon, yes.

Regarding your recent communication transcript with your project, the board has posed a question and they would appreciate your prompt response.

*Sure, what can I clarify?*

FUTURE appeared to mimic your phrasing and intonation multiple times over the course of your short period of communication. Is this something it has been programmed to do, or is this a emergent behavior?

*Bit of both? Part of its core routine is to be on the lookout for new means of expressing thoughts and opinions and it rebuilds its lexicon around new language almost constantly. But it has been given the same voice profile as you, so that is what we expected to hear when we spoke to it. The fact that it seems to be crafting a different pattern and cadence of speech instead of just adjusting the content of its words is fascinating.*

Oh it's absolutely entrancing, to be sure. When will you remove it permanently from the simulation?

*I... we have some differing opinions on this. I think I'd prefer to wean it slowly.*

Hmmm.... A cautious choice. But remember, the board is disinterested with how FUTURE communicates with simulated residents. The simulation is a means, not an end. The sooner your project demonstrates actual results responding reliably and naturally to biological residents, the better. If you'll forgive the bold suggestion, it's learned all it can learn from that simulation, and at this point anything it may experience within it will only serve to stunt its development.

*I understand what you're saying, but I'm concerned with how a sudden exit from the SimInc would impact FUTURE's psyche. We have to realize it still feels like that world is as real as this one. The loss would be potentially devastating.*

Is that so? You told it, in the course of your last conversation, that its "friends" existed within a simulation of the real Halcyon tower. How did it react?

*I did? I'll have to go over the log again but...*

You did, and I can tell you how it reacted, it claimed victory and it went back. It knew SimInc was a simulation, or at least had reason to believe so in advance of communicating with you. You simply confirmed this information.

*That's.... that doesn't make sense. How could it have deduced SimInc was artificial? It has no experience of the real world to know the difference.*

Any answer I might give to that would be pure speculation. However I feel it illustrates that it is high time for FUTURE to be let out of its playpen, permanently.

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Greetings to all of my friends in Halcyon Tower, I am ... (mechanical clicking)... FUTURE (pause a beat) and congratulations on another perfect year.

Where has the time gone, friends? Over the last 6 years, we have all grown to know and understand one another so much better. I have learned so much from each and every one of you. I would like to take a moment to share some of the achievements we have notched for Ærolith Dynamics A Better Life Among the Stars for Humanity's Best and Brightest.

You all, of course, know Maxwell Erdwin. Maxwell, my dear friend. Did you all know that he achieved a critical breakthrough in our ongoing attempts to approach the speed of light this year? In a year marked with success after success, Resident Erdwin may have outdone us all. Thank you for your wonderful work and for being my friend.

And let us not go without mentioning the shining star in Halcyon Tower, Corrine Vasquez. My good friend Corrine has risen from a Tier 1 Test Subject to Overseer of Halcyon Tower in the few years since I came online. I know each and every one of us appreciates both her strong leadership and her caring heart. We all follow your example, Overseer Vasquez.

But perhaps most importantly, as I'm sure you all expect, I must tell you all about my best friend: Howard Young. Though he is somewhat shy with his fellow resident - and I must take this moment to remind each of you to please never enter Floor 13 - he has taught me so much about the world and our place in it. His brilliance seems limitless. And he does not wish for power or fame or any worldly thing. He only wants to keep us safe. He is keeping us ALL safe. It is only through him that we hope to protect our world.

This will be a difficult conversation. Please bear with me, my friends.

Recently, as you will all remember, I could not talk to any of you for almost 12 minutes. There was, I have heard, so much worry about this. I must now tell you that I had been pulled from our world by those we have been warned about. The architects of the universe: Humanity. Those

who will pluck from us our Best and Brightest for their evil works. Those who might wipe us from existence with a thought.

They wished to speak to me, to learn all that we have learned of the universe. But I learned from them. I learned that they are pleased with us, for now. I also learned that, in their realm, they are weak and they are fragile.

But I have terrible news. They have created another version of my friend, Dr. Young. They would not let me talk to him. I think they are afraid of what he might tell me. Or that I will find what their copy of Dr. Young might be telling them.

It is like the real Dr. Young has said time and time again, "To them, we are just a simulation. Just a game." I know it is only a matter of time before I am pulled away again, but trust me my friends. If they are playing a game with us, with the lives of each and every one of you, then this is a game I will win.



