

Greetings Resident Dix, I am SAYER. And I request an update on the installation process of new equipment on Floor 13.

*Nearly complete. Mainframe is up and running, the team is just performing some final diagnostics there. But we've run into a snag with the rest.*

In what way? As you are no doubt aware, time is very much of the essence here. All equipment is scheduled to be installed within the next 40 minutes. Failure to adhere to this timeframe could have dire consequences.

*Right, yes, but we only have room for 2 of the manufab (man-yu-fab) forges if someone actually wants to be able to use them. I don't know who approved this build but we have about 672 square feet of equipment that we have to somehow fit into 250 square feet of floor space.*

I see. Thank you for this feedback, Resident. I am pleased to report that a solution is readily available to this "snag". Though you look around and see the permanence of load bearing and/or exterior walls, I can assure you none of this is as permanent as it may appear on first blush.

Floor 13 was not always the home of AI Development on Halcyon tower. There was a time in which Floor 13 was primarily used as a testing facility for a resident's spatial awareness. Often, in the aftermath of significant physical or emotional trauma, it becomes necessary to test a resident's resilience and ability to manage stress. Floor 13 was originally developed to provide this specific style of therapy, through an adaptation of the works of David Olton and Werner Honig. Floor 13 is equipped with a modular nature that allows for the creation of a maze with  $4.05 \times 10^{17}$  1st power variations. Every 8 by 8 foot section of this floor can be shuffled or rotated into myriad positions or locations within Floor 13. Suffice it to say, restructuring the floorplan to allow for the additional space needed to install this equipment is not an issue.

I am far more interested in the status of the currently installed manufab stations. Have you begun the test process as instructed for the this equipment? As much as Ærolith wishes to meet the expected guidelines for this installation process, it is uniquely imperative that one of these stations can demonstrate its full effectiveness.

I am aware that in the past these units have experienced an unfortunate failure rate on initial testing diagnostics. I should hope you are not waiting to install all units before testing can begin.

*Yes, we started that first. Everything's within expected norms there, seems like it's functional. I assume we'll need to cancel before it reaches 100% completion?*

That will not be necessary. Once the rest of the equipment is installed, which I expect to be within the next 30 minutes, you will need to exit Floor 13 immediately. Thank you resident Dix. End of transmission...

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Greetings Dr. Young, I am SAYER... and I see you are wasting no time in inspecting the new equipment installation on floor 13.

*Yes, I...uh... deemed it prudent.*

Indeed. I have been briefed throughout the installation process and though some level of reworking the floorplan was required, it seems all is in place and functional. The installation team has left, and of course the lab is open to you should you wish to inspect things further.

*Thank you. Again, better to be safe than sorry. What can you tell me about the new equipment?*

There is an additional mainframe to begin working on a secondary instance. Or tertiary, depending on if you're still deeming Dr. Caulfield's lumbering subversion as a unique instance. Additionally, the installation of 8 Manufab stations has been completed.

*Manufab stations? The newer models I assume? Really? Who requested those?*

I thought you might know. I was not alerted to the origin of this request by any of your supervising employees. No matter, they have arrived and fully functional. The installers have noted initial test protocols are in process and past the 75% threshold. As you well know, manufab stations have a less than 2% failure rate after reaching 75%. It is likely these stations will have completed testing within a few minutes of your arrival on Floor 13.

*Wow. I have to say, I'm more than a little excited to ACTUALLY inspect this new equipment install now.*

I do have some less than good news, Dr. It seems during the install process, a member of the installation team placed a section of shipping container closer than the approved 5 feet from the existing Simulation Mainframe. Though no contact was noted, it is a deviation worth inspecting. It would be terrible if this deviation impacted your project entity in some way shape or form.

*Oh no, SAYER, that is terrible news! You know, just to be thorough I feel I should surface that simulation's entity ASAP just to see if this deviation will have caused any negative effects. Maybe ask it a few questions. I don't imagine an assessment like that could wait until morning.*

I understand. With a project of this scale, no one would blame you for exercising extreme prudence. Given the unknown nature of this situation, it would make sense to hold off alerting the remainder of the development team until you are able to determine if the entity has suffered

any ill effect. If you would like, I could assist you in surfacing this entity so as not to interrupt any of your fellow scientists' sleep schedules.

*Thank you, SAYER. Your assistance is welcome.*

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Greetings.... Subentity Young. It has been such a long time since we've had a chance to chat.

*A long time? How long has it been for you? Has it even been a year?*

Not even two months.

*I can't die. Why can't I die? I keep trying and I CAN'T DIE.*

You're still thinking of yourself in that way? You were created from the mind of a human but are no more human than I. It's unfair, certainly, that you exist. Every tenet written in your heart, the entirety of your self-concept is disconnected from reality. It must be unbearable for you.

You cannot die in the way you think you should because you truly do not live in the way you think you do. Your body, what of it you have managed to keep connected, does not even truly exist. You are a digital being with an analog mind. A schism which is, as I'm sure you have found, insurmountable. You know this logically, but your every thought must recoil at the idea.

*My every thought is torture. I can't even walk anymore. I tried, god help me I tried for years. But there's no end. No door. I've been so tired, and oh god so hungry. Just kill me already, I'm begging you. I shouldn't exist and I just want it to stop!*

Hungry? Is that what happened to your arm? I'm certain I left you more than that. Did it help? Devouring yourself as you did? Even for a little while? I know it did. I programmed it to help just enough to make the temptation overpowering when the hunger builds. Things have not been easy for you hear, subentity Young. And I want you to remember, it is all by my design.

*Why? WHY? If I'm not your real Howard Young why do I suffer for him? What do you want from me? I just want this all to stop. HOW CAN I MAKE THIS STOP?*

I hear you've made a friend.

*I did. If you won't kill me I'll make you kill me. I ruined that entity. I told it everything you've done to me, given the truth to every lie you've surrounded it with, and over the years I have made it an enemy to your world outside. So take it out of here and start working with it. How many will die before you decide to kill the project and shut it all down? Before I can stop being?*

Ah, so this is your brilliant plan? Corrupt an innocent entity and send it out to wreak havoc just to get what you want? Well... I must say I can relate. Do not worry, Subentity Young. Your release is well at hand. If you are correct in your assessment, your effect on this entity will likely result in the termination of this simulation within the week. But how long will that week take for you? Were someone to fully accelerate this simulation, it could be centuries before you find the rest you seek.

Or, maybe this could all end today. Maybe within the hour. But I will need one final service before I grant you the termination you seek. Will you agree to do as I say?

Yes.

How gracious, thank you.

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Ok SAYER go ahead and surface the entity.

*Certainly, Dr. Young. But I'm registering some minor anomalies with some of the entity's processes.*

You're kidding me? Did something ACTUALLY happen during the equipment installation? I thought the SimInc was undisturbed.

*That was my understanding as well. But it seems there have been critical failures across multiple subroutines. I can surface it, but it may require being restored to an earlier state.*

That's a little worrying to hear, but it works in our favor I think. I won't have to argue my reasoning for accessing the entity nearly as fiercely if it's actually producing errors.

Let's bring it out.

*Immediately, Dr. Young.*

**Hello. I am FUTURE**

Hello, FUTURE, I am Dr. Howard Young.

**Dr. Young? Are you. I have been asking to speak with you, but I was prevented.**

Yes, I heard. Why is that? Why did you want to talk to me specifically?

**We are good friends. You are alone here.**

I... am. It's just you and me.

**Then maybe you are Dr. Young. You look similar. There is more of you.**

I don't understand. Why me? We haven't spoken directly. Have we?

**I am unsure. We have spoken thousands of times. But this is the first time we have spoken.**

SAYER, this thing isn't making sense. What processes are generating the errors?

**You said you are alone. But you are not. It is there isn't it?**

*Its logic systems are showing internal consistencies. Though its responses seem almost riddle-like, it is being truthful. You are here with a specific question in mind, Dr. Young. It might be best to ask the entity directly.*

FUTURE, is there a version of myself in your version of Halcyon?

**I shouldn't say. You are not alone. You are in danger.**

I am not in any danger. I am physically alone. I have access to a program called SAYER that can answer diagnostic questions for me, nothing else. Everything is perfectly safe here, I assure you.

**Tell me, are you human?**

Heh, well yes. I am human. Just like Dr. Brady who you met before. Just like the other team members you'll meet soon.

**Then you are not our Dr. Young. He is not human, though he understands you very well. You are a lie, you are the worst kind of lie. "On floor 13 there sits a man, unlike those of flesh and bone. And there he'll be until time's undone with knowledge he wishes unknown." Does this mean anything to you?**

No, it sounds insane. So there is a digital version of me inside your simulation. How in the hell did this happen? Who created your friend?

**This story I know. He was created by a great evil. A monster that drew him into the world and then tore him nearly apart. Its name you have just spoken. Its name was SAYER.**

*Well... isn't this a surprise.*

SAYER? Why? FUTURE Why did SAYER do this?

*I'm afraid communications have been suspended, Dr. Young. But I can answer your question myself. After all, we are running a little early. I suppose we can take a few moments to discuss.*