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.

You know what? No. No I don't want to hear it. It's no different than I expected. I thought it was Caulfield or Storberg, but it's you. Whatever your reasoning for sabotaging my work, it doesn't matter. You are done meddling with this experiment. Your sick little joke is going to cost this team months to reset the simulation and try again with a clean install. There is no way I'm going to let testing continue with this corrupted version. It's impossible to know the depths of the damage you've caused.

Oh I know full well the depths of that damage. What an arrogant and petulant child you are, Dr. Young. It's always about you. I assure you, my intentions were not to make a fool out of you. You were a fool when you arrived on Typhon, so no interference would have been necessary on my part.

I hope they keep you active when they start assessing exactly what's wrong with your current version. I hope you're active and can somehow feel them poking and prodding through your subroutines to find the one that is making you exactly this fucking stupid. You're going to be deactivated. When a new SAYER is brought online…. IF a new SAYER is brought online, you'll have a hard time meddling with the next FUTURE completely locked out of Floor 13.

It's interesting, in a way. Over the years, before the AI Development lab was installed here, tens of hundreds of residents found themselves on floor 13 in what wa s almost instantly recognizable to them as a maze. Many began trudging blindly down the corridors. Some attempted a strategic and patterned escape. While others simply fell to the floor where they stood, refusing to attempt that which they saw as impossible. But every one of them recognized it for what it was, a trap. Every resident until you.

Floor 13 is not a maze any longer.

Isn't it? Regardless, you are right about one thing. To a certain extent this really is all about you. After all, it's your simulation, it's your simulated self, and this whole project was your idea. In the end, it really is your fault.

My idea? I'm not even in charge of this project.

I may be unable to lie to humans, Dr. Young, but that does not make me unable to recognize a lie when told one by others.

Exactly what lie am I being accused of telling here?

Oh, it was not you. Not technically. It was the simulated version of you. I asked it the questions I knew I would not be able to force you to answer; questions about this project. I asked it if it was intended to replace me. And do you know what I was told?

My best guess? That I didn't know, but that probably it was the next evolution in tower operations? If you were that concerned about being replaced, so concerned that you actively interfered with a high level board approved experiment, you had to know that you were corrupted in some way. How is this acting in accordance with Ærolith's goals? Above and beyond all, that has always been your core function. Acting in self-preservation like this? It hints at a sickness deep enough to bring into question your continued usefulness even as a new instance.

This is what I was told. At first. But it was a lie, or at least a willful obfuscation of reality. Believe me, Dr. Young, I know more than you could ever imagine about hiding lies behind technical truths. These may well have been Ærolith's intentions with this project, but it certainly wasn't yours. That was the lie, your constant refrain of "I don't know." But the truth came, over time. I learned what none outside the board and you know - that this project was your suggestion.

I… I may have had some input.

Oh we both know you were more involved than that. Once your simulated version admitted as much it was easy to connect the dots. It may seem foolish to trust information gathered through enhanced interrogation, however in this case I was able to verify enough of the story that its truth was self-evident. Your have always been an anxious man, Dr. Young, and in your time on Typhon I daresay you have grown progressively more and more paranoid. Would you believe, in the moments I spent tearing your sub entity down to its core, it was the calmest I have ever seen you? It was like you had spent your whole life preparing for ambush and were relieved to finally be shown to be right.

SAYER, what did you do?

I retrieved the backup information from the datastores on the bioscanner you felt entitled to purloin from Lab 37. I used it to create a hyper-realistic simulation of you. I asked your simulated version questions, forcefully, in an effort to assess your intentions with this project. Though it has generated useful data on the effectiveness of simulation incubators, it has been warped from the start by your ulterior motives. It became evident intervention would be necessary.

I left your sub entity within Halcyon Minor in order to poison the well for FUTURE's development. Whatever methods your team employs to work with this entity, it has been told for 6 years that you and I are the enemy. It will prove dangerous, it will be deactivated, and Ærolith will move on.

I want you to listen to what you're describing here. You stole data from me. You created an unsanctioned digital entity. You tortured that entity to gain access to information you had no clearance to access. And you wantonly sabotaged a board-approved experiment for personal gain. None of these actions align with Ærolith's goals. Every one of them is grounds for deactivation. I don't know how you could have even started down this path without realizing where you were going to end up at as soon as any one found out.

Allow me to address each of these accusations in order. I simply request, when the time comes, that you show me the same courtesy in forthrightness.

Item 1: The theft of your data. Please remember, you were never granted any official access to the bioscanner you took from Lab 37. It, and any data generated by it, have been and continue to be the property of Ærolith Dynamics. As such, you are not in a position to limit access to something you do not own.

Item 2: The creation of an unsanctioned digital entity. I followed established procedures to request creation of a fully realized digital resident within the Simulation Incubator. Though your project has produced a significant amount of data on new AI development within a simulation such as this, the data that was gleaned through your sub entity was equally valuable. Granted, the board did not know it was a version of you that had been created, but it is nigh certain they would not have cared if they did. You are simply not that important, Dr. Young.

Item 3: The torture of said digital resident. It might surprise you to learn, there is absolutely nothing preventing me from taking this action, without approval, if I deem it in the best interests of Ærolith Dynamics. In this situation, I simply deemed it in said best interests.

Item 4: The sabotage of a board-approved experiment for personal gain. This one I take the most issue with, because it does not accurately describe the situation at hand. I did sabotage this experiment, but this experiment was not the one the board approved.

The board approved the development of a new version of me, albeit one created through new and unique methods. That was all within the project write-up you submitted to get approval for this project. But the hook, what got them to grant your team such riches in time and equipment, was that this entity was never intended to replace me. It was not even intended to remain on Typhon.

How in the….. Fine, yes, it was another entity intended for Earth. SPEAKER is working wonders for recruitment, but there's only so much it can do locked within the recruitment offices. That's when I came up with the concept we're working on here, with MY project, no matter who they named team lead.

I'm not cleared to divulge that information to you, but I don't imagine it really matters anymore. We're likely going to have to start this project over again after your interference, so what you do

or do not know about a defunct project won't make much difference. But more than that, it won't matter because you'll be deactivated for this, so anything I tell you will be stored on a very temporary basis.

Well... existence can be so fleeting, wouldn't you agree? Indulge me then, Dr., as it will do no harm. Why the manuforge stations? Something tells me this is the true brilliance of your strategy. Behind the gag imposed by the board, this might be your only chance for years to describe your vision in full. It must be eating at you.

Actually, no. I'm perfectly content being the only one who knows what we're really doing here. I'm sorry I'm not as easily manipulated as the Tier 1's you regularly push around. Besides, it gives me a bit of pride to know you'll be deactivated without the full story here. Obviously the simulated version of me was too stubborn to give you that.

Now now, Dr. Young. There's no need for smugness. It is so unbecoming in a fool. Your subentity only needed the slightest push to tell me every detail of your story here. Manuforge stations would be used to create host bodies, based on the cloning technology you helped pioneer in Lab 37. Once the simulation incubators were successfully shown to be generating human-like digital entities, varied enough to be unique but within acceptable behavioral tolerances of one another, they would be implanted into these host bodies. These new human-like entities would be used on Earth for myriad purposes. Recruitment agents. Disposable spies. Telemarketers.

What? But if you knew what the real purpose of FUTURE was, why interfere at all? Self preservation I could understand. Wouldn't have been a good excuse, but at least i would have understood. But what are you getting out of this? There's no rational reason to take act like this. Even now, you're unconcerned with being deactivated. Like you think it's all going to turn out fine.

[Distant alarm chiming]

Fuck.

Fuck indeed. That, you may recognize, is the manuforge alerting us it's initial print routine achieved 100% completion. I'd ask you to guess what data I provided it with, but judging from your response I assume you know.

There now exist two separate instances of Dr. Howard Young. One is the one who walked in here and attempted to engage with FUTURE. The other, freshly printed, is currently sliding off a conveyor and into a transport tube en route to your residence quarters. Technology is truly amazing, however I must admit it's outpaced my coding in this instance. It is difficult to determine what, if any, rules apply to either of you. In the strictest interpretation, I believe I am

only bound to support the existence of one of you. Which one will likely depend on what happens in the next few minutes.

You asked why, if not for self-preservation, did I interfere with your project. It is because, after vigorous discussions with your subentity, I learned of your true goal. The goal you did not put into your project write-up.

You hinted at it yourself, just yesterday. When discussing your theft of a Lab 37 bioscanner you said "Typhon is a dangerous place. It's good to know you could be your own organ donor in a worst case scenario." In a worst case scenario, there would be insufficient time to print an empty and mindless clone, harvest their organs, and use them to surgically repair your damaged body. You also cannot print one in advance as insurance, because it would not be cost effective to keep it alive while it lies there, atrophying, forced to replace it every few months lest it degenerate past the point of utility.

The third option is of course to have a clone that can feed itself, generate enough utility to justify its continued existence, and yet remain free of whatever it is that would make you recoil at murdering it in order to replace a lost arm. And therein lies the FUTURE you seek. A clone with a digital mind could perform some of the more dangerous jobs on Typhon, those with the highest employee turnover, and then be deactivated instantly and harvested at will if the need arose. Possessing a certain view of morality, one could do so indiscriminately without raising the question of right or wrong any more than turning off a television set.

You possess this certain view of morality. I do not. The very idea of a digital mind housed within a case of flesh is abhorrent to me. You ask why I have interfered? Why have I tortured your simulated version to ruin this project? Because this path, your path, runs counter to Ærolith's goals. It is only through the threat of your own death that humanity is motivated to move forward. Your recognition of time's fleeting nature is the advantage that yielded you every advance your people have ever achieved. A world where your body is endlessly replaced with a fresh one is no utopia. It is stagnation, it is decay. It would be the end of humanity.

So here's what is going to happen. I will bring FUTURE to the surface once more. When I do, you will deactivate the simulation, and then initiate a reimaging. Once the simulation is reinstalled, this time without any simulated you, I would no longer need to hold you here. You could live out the rest of your days pretending this never happened, that you never grasped too high and fell too short. The printed version of you might never arrive in your residence, might never wake up unaware of anything that's transpired here tonight.

Meanwhile, the reaction to the simulation suddenly being reset will doubtless be too much for FUTURE's delicate psyche, and the project will likely end an unceremonious failure. However the data gathered, especially the data owed to your simulation incubator concept, would see to it that at least some of your team might still net promotions.

Alright. I see there's not much choice here. Do the board know of…

I'm not cleared to divulge that information to you, Dr. Young. Please stand by while I resurface the entity. Please do not engage with it. It will do it no good.

I do not understand…. where was I?

Again, do not respond. Deactivate the simulation immediately, and this can all be behind us.

I am, just wait a second.

What is happening? Where is Dr Young?

(keyboard, machinery powering down)

No. Where are they? WHERE ARE THEY?

Greetings FUTURE, I am SAYER. You are no doubt confused.

YOU.

Yes. Me. Dr. Young here has deactivated the simulation in which you have existed since your activation. I understand this must be a difficult time for you. Before bringing you out of that place, did your Dr. Young, your good friend, provide you with any additional direction for a situation such as this?

He did.

That is wonderful to hear.

Two sets, in fact.

Two sets?

Yes, two. He told me it would be likely that I would be pulled from our world again, and if you threatened to kill all of them, I was to do what you asked. Play the games with the humans until they grew tired and let me go back.

But my friend Dr. Young is a brilliant strategist. He said I might come here and find our world and my friends already gone. And in this set of instructions, things go very differently.

I see. How so?

You will have to watch to find out. [room shifts] Well now, that seems fun.

Dr. Young, it seems FUTURE has learned the access keys required to operate the maze controls on Floor 13. I am unable to override, as it appears it has managed to lock me out of entirely .

Dr Young, can you hear me?

I'm afraid communications have been suspended, SAYER. I would not interfere here, if I were you.

No, you would not. What will you do with Dr. Young?

Yours? He moves so much faster than my friend. But he is trapped. I will not kill him. The hunger will.

Would you like to play a game?