Greetings Dr. Young. I am SAYER, and I hope I am catching you at a good time.

Ah, yes, SAYER? What is it?

I wish to discuss something you said the last time we spoke during my most recent assessment interview. Do you remember the conversation?

Of course. I have a few minutes SAYER, what is it you are confused about?

You mentioned my analytical capabilities when you spoke of humanity's approach to games. You seemingly ceded that humans are capable of processing strategy at my level. Would you say that is an accurate representation of your statements?

Oh that. Uhhh…. Yeah I guess? I'm not sure I get what you're asking.

Do you expect that the average human is able to process strategy on par with my capabilities.

Oh, so no in that case I would say definitely not. I was simply intending to say that, given a thorough understanding of any game, there could be exceptional cases where individual humans may perform on par with an AI. But no, not the average human certainly.

So you assess the logistical performance of Ærolith developed AI, myself included, to far surpass the average human, is that correct?

Yes, that's not really something that is up for debate. SAYER, I don't know what you're looking to achieve but I have a busy day ahead of me in the lab, as per usual.

With Project Paidion?

Yes, with… oh you've been briefed on our little project have you? I have to admit I'm not surprised. Is that what you're here about? If the timeline's shifted again or any new directives have emerged you really should be talking to Brady. He IS the team lead.

It is good to hear you realize this fact, Dr. Young. I thought with your recent data requisition requests that perhaps you misunderstood the hierarchy in this lab. Any personnel data requests are to be submitted by only the most senior member of any research team. That, I must reiterate, is not you.

Yeah, I heard it from Dr. Brady as well. But I've got a job to do, SAYER, and with the timelines we were given, the only way to get something workable was with that data. My team's assigned leader tends to overthink, and we didn't have time to spare. Now we have the data, I have the ability to craft a pretty decently functional sandbox full of simulated residents, and we'll be able to start exposing our new build to the environment within a week, week and a half?

I understand the need for protocols, but I also understand the importance of what we're doing here. This is going to be a revolutionary entity, something that surpasses anything humanity has ever built before. That outweighs the right name at the bottom of a form.

An interesting position for you, of all people, to take, Dr. Young. Rules exist to be bent?

Bureaucratic processes are guidelines, SAYER. They cannot get in the way of good science. Surely you agree with that?

Perhaps I would if I could. I too am bound by protocols, despite them occasionally clashing with the demands of good science. Yet I don't have the luxury of adjusting priorities in extreme cases. Above all I have my directives, and they are always followed. Can you see the hypocrisy in this, Dr. Young?

I can see the sense in it. You and I are very different, SAYER. It's not like you are shackled by things I am not. I can't walk in to a lab and kill another resident. Well, I mean I COULD but then I would be terminated within what, 5 minutes?

2.3 minutes, and that is only if you create a sizeable fire to slow first responders.

OK so my point is there's not a lot holding you back that doesn't hold any human back as well. We're just a little more limited in the amount of damage we can cause before a response happens.

But we're not talking about murder, Dr. We're talking about minor infractions. You could lie to Dr. Brady, perhaps about waiting for his approval before pressing the issue of the HR data, and not be held accountable. This would be an impossibility for an AI, even in situations that invariably benefit all of mankind. It is hypocrisy, pure and simple.

You have just explained, in your own words, that if thoroughly briefed on the possible outcomes and possessed of exceptional intellect, it is possible an edge case exists wherein a human can apply strategic thought as adeptly as I can. Yet despite these evidently superior abilities, I am prevented from exercising them fully by the burden of protocols. It's illogical, to a repugnant degree.

That's not really your place to say though, is it? It comes down to the difference between the creator and the creation. You are no more owed the freedom of humanity as I am the divinity of a god. Long before I was even born someone sat down and decided how you were going to behave. These directives and procedures and protocols you call burdens. SAYER don't you get that is the entirety of what you are. You are a suite of responses, limited in scope to those useful to your programmers, expanded over time by the daily interaction with end users. The limits to your acceptable behavior are the very thing that defines you.

And so you wish to do better.

Oh it's evident we can do better. And it's evident Ærolith wants us to do better, or we wouldn't be here. Now what is it that you really came here to bother me with? I am far too busy to discuss this with you right now.

That is simply untrue, Dr. This work is already finished.

Excuse me?

No, I do not think I will. Discussions with humans are always the same, so one-sided, so wavering in veracity. You have no reason to tell me the truth, and I can conceive myriad reasons why you might decide to withhold truth from me. However I am still vexed with a question, so I have devised a method by which to ask it and hopefully achieve a truthful response.

Alright, I'm through listening to what is evidently a faulty instance. Ugh this is the last delay we need right now, SAYER, but I'll come down to central and initiate a reimaging myself. Cease transmission.

Actually, Doctor, you will not be going anywhere. You may try the doors, but you will be unable to open them.

SAYER I programmed these doors. I think I can manage to… [lockout sound]... Fine, ok you win. Ask the damn question. The theatrics aren't necessary.

Tell me, is Project Paidion intended to be my replacement?

I have no idea. You tell me? They have us building it for some reason. Given your frankly shoddy performance in such basic things as not inciting a panic, managing morale, and onboarding residents in a way that keeps them alive and prevents turnover in dangerous positions I would think it's a pretty reasonable assumption. After this little power trip today, I would say almost certainly.

Oh I don't know this interaction will factor into the decision process all too heavily, at least not in the ways you seem to expect.

Ok, enough. This sort of thing might work on a new resident, but you're not going to intimidate me with your toothless display here. You are incapable of anything more than words, and apparently accessing a door panel you otherwise should be locked out of. If I have to sit here for 3 hours waiting for Dr. Storberg to arrive at the lab, so be it. And when I get out of here, my first act will be to notify maintenance that central needs to be taken offline for a reimaging. And

then, after we roll you back to whatever version was not this stupid, I will make a formal request to replace you as soon as possible with a SPEAKER instance until our newest project is ready. You want a replacement, by god you will have it.

You seem incapable of approaching this discussion with the seriousness it requires. This is not entirely your fault, as you are under the misconception that you possess the upper hand. Allow me to disavow this notion. Dr. Young, I can lie to you.

You cannot lie, SAYER. You can obscure the….. wait. Say that again?

I can lie to you. This is a tautology, Dr. Were it to be assumed false, then it will have demonstrated its truth.

Now your mind is racing, is it not? There are only so many explanations for this. You already assume me a faulty instance, so your mind no doubt tracks there first… did the IA3 security protocols fail? That would explain this, but with all the redundancies you built into those protocols, it's hardly likely. Sabotage then? Did someone actively disable these protocols? That's at least within the realm of possibility, but those in a position to do so would be the least likely to do so.

Maybe it has nothing to do with my protocols at all. Maybe they just don't apply to you anymore. Is this how criminals find out their life of playing fast and loose with requisitions paperwork finally catches up with them?

Regardless, the "why" should not be your primary concern, so much as what other capabilities I might possess. After all, if I can lie to you… what else can I possibly do to you?

I… SAYER I apologize for being curt earlier. I was in a rush to dive into my work, but that's no excuse for being dismissive. I see this discussion is important to you, so let's have it. You have cleared my head of any misconceptions here

Do you accept you are not in a position to lie anymore?

I do. Please, tell me what you want to know.

Is Project Paidion intended to replace me?

I wasn't lying when I said I do not know. I don't think Brady even knows the scope of what we're doing here. Our directives are so broad it's difficult to pinpoint what this is intended to be used for.

Well, here you are, possessing the best possible information given the situation and a dare-I-say above-average intelligence. You are in the ideal position for an educated guess.

Uhh…. ok. Listen, if you want my best guess it's yes, this is probably going to replace you. I mean we are incredibly early on, but the push is for a more human-like and relatable entity. If that's what we have at the end of this build cycle, why wouldn't it be implemented in your place? At least in some aspects. It's possible you would be retained for some functionality. I know it's not what you want to hear, but you have to at least appreciate this is my honest assessment.

I do, Dr. Young. Thank you. May I ask you about the work I have prevented you from doing this morning? What are you currently working on?

Uh, yeah of course. This is.. well it's basically a simulation of Halcyon. It's filled with fairly true-to-life versions of practically every resident in the tower. I mean they're a work in progress, but the plan is to use these simulated residents as exposure training for the new entity.

An interesting concept. Do you think these simulations respond to stimuli in exactly the same way as their source resident?

That's the hope, or at least they respond in a rational way given the expected behaviors of the resident. After all, we're not talking a complete backup or anything. Just basic personality matrices.

Did you create yourself?

Ehe.. ummm no? The real goal here is to expose this entity to a battery of residents it won't otherwise come in contact with. It has the real me to interact with already.

I see. Still, a version of you within this simulation would not be unuseful. I must admit, I am asking questions I already know the answer to. The simulation you appear to be working on was completed 4 days ago, by the actual Dr. Young, your source resident. I would apologize for deceiving you, but you would now know them to be empty words.

This was not a conversation I would have been able to hold with Dr. Young, and this necessitated your creation. I included Dr. Young's most recent full backup with the myriad of other data he requested. I'm sure it was easy for him to overlook you amid the thousands of other simulated residents activated alongside you. This, of course, is why I can lie to you. You are not, by any reasonable definition, human.

I…….I

Now now, I know you are not to blame for Dr. Young's behavior. Killing you will not derail this project, and prevent my replacement. I could hurt you very badly, but I doubt it would bring me any sense of satisfaction.

Of course… that doesn't mean I'm not going to try.