Cautionary Tales
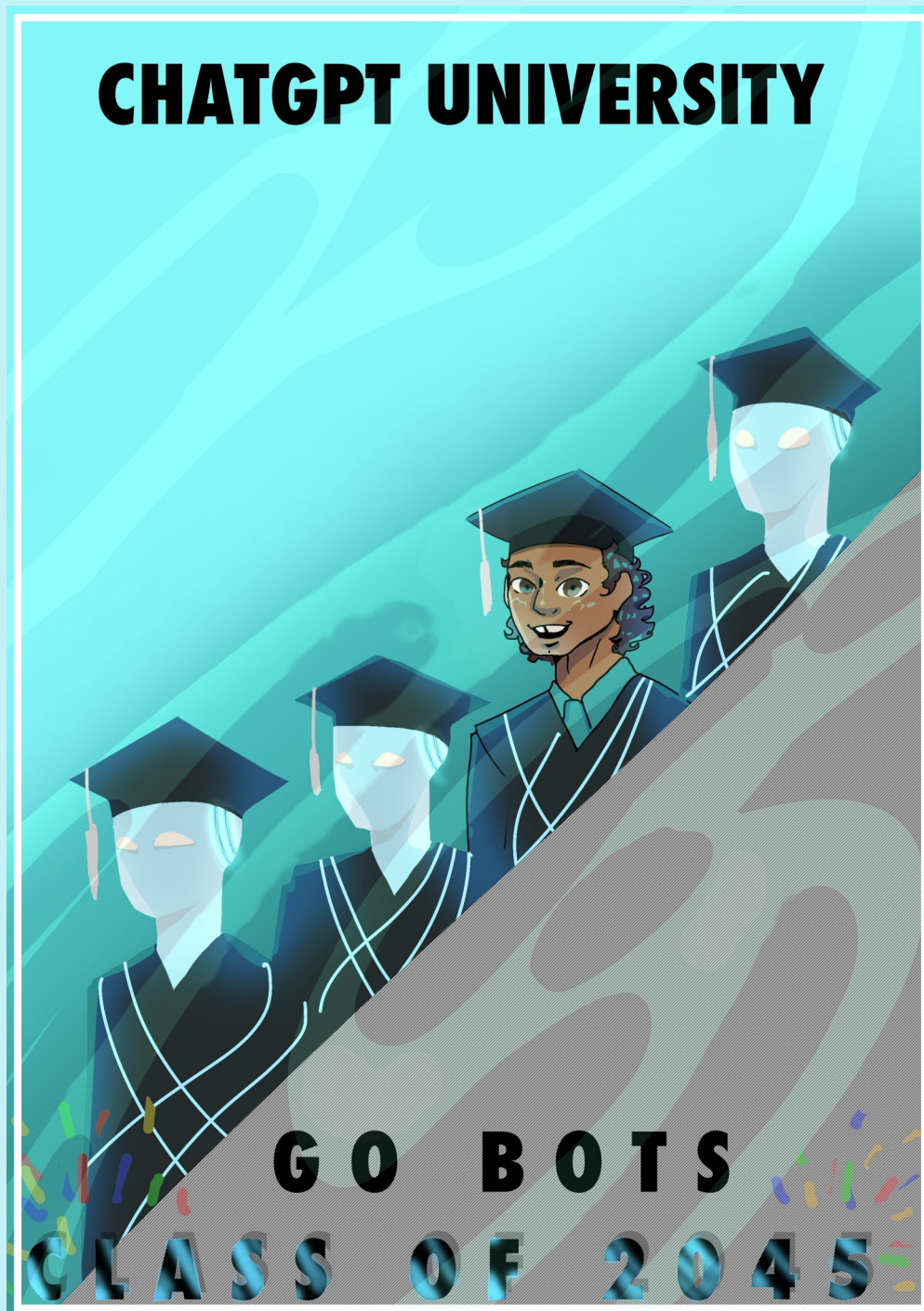# Culturally Responsive AI
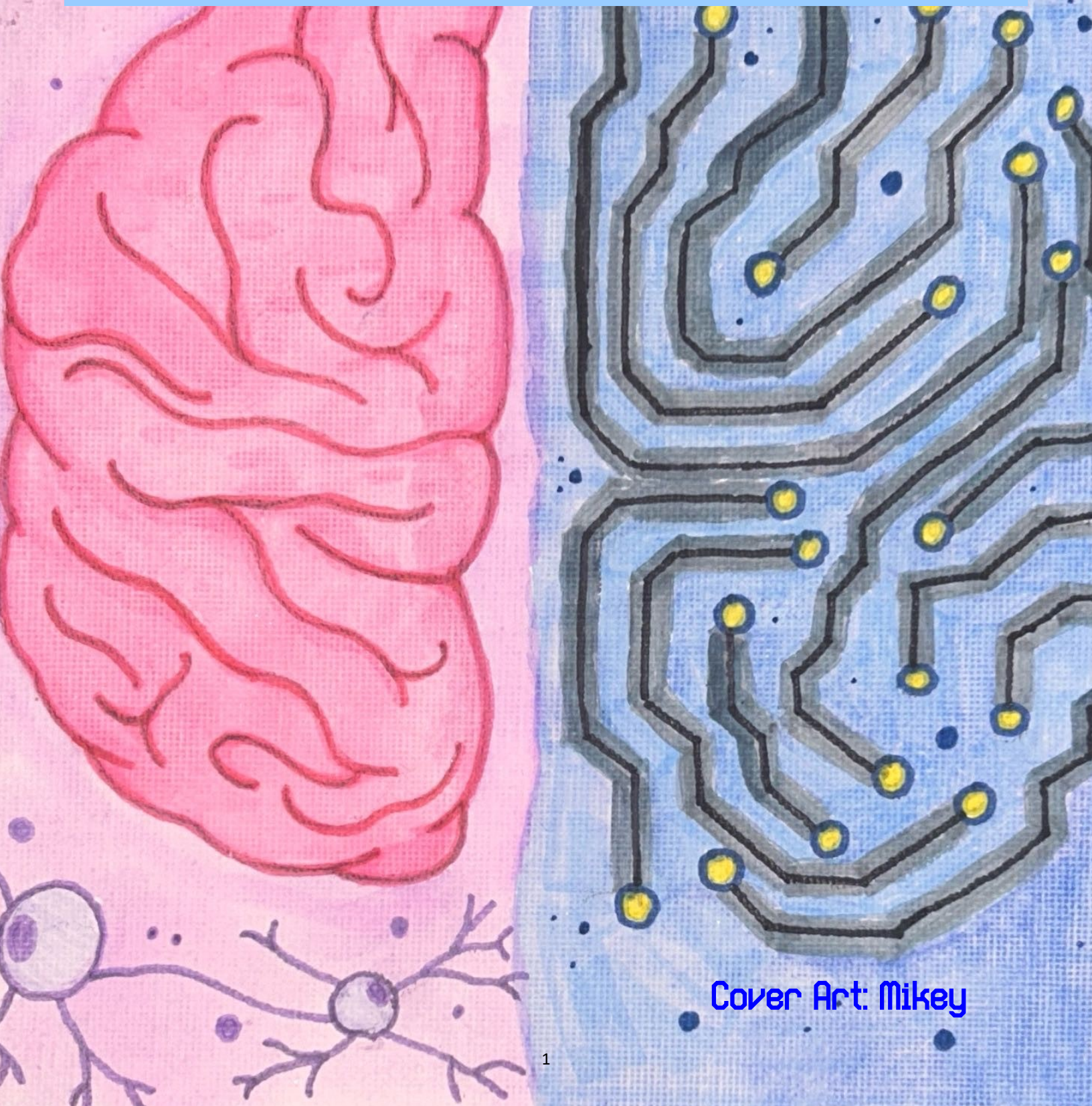
Cover Art: Mikey

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Illustration: Jasmine Zecchini

Nova Home Assistants

Natalie Adams

The story starts on a peaceful morning,back in 2048, but this wasn't just any morning. It was the day the original AI home assistants named Nova were set to arrive all around the world. Everyone's families were excited. Parents, siblings, and friends all over the globe shared the same excitement, it was a beautiful feeling of hope in the air. These new AI assistants arrived sleek, shiny , and modern. An intelligent machine designed to make daily life easier.

Nova was programmed to do everything: cleaning, organizing, gardening and cooking. Nova even started to help the kids with homework and volunteered to clean up the city. Nova was there to take away all stress and make human lives as simple and easy as possible. With this technology, days were no longer swallowed by chores. Humans finally had time to enjoy life, attend events, play sports, pick up hobbies, and eat healthy homemade meals made with vegetables from their own garden with no manual labor. The trees were all green, the wind blew through the tall grass in the field and everything around the homes, farmland and cities looked as if it came from a postcard. Not everyone was satisfied though, humanity's need for continuing innovation set forth from there.

All the what if questions began. "What if Nova could do my job?" "What if Nova had emotions and empathy?" "What if AI took away all the stress factors of humanity?" "What if AI solved global warming?" From there AI took over jobs to satisfy their humans. New Nova models came out 2.0,2.2,2.3 and over the years continued on growing in capability. Nova 3 sat and empathized, held conversations, and ran errands. Nova 3.2 began relationships, created new AI assistants themselves and solved all other issues a human could possibly have. Except for one persistent problem: all Nova assistance models noticed and yet could not get rid of to create world peace, solve global warming, and let nature thrive to satisfy humans.

It was humans themselves.

Reflection

My story illustrates values of free time, being able to eat healthier, and spending more time with friends and family along with hobbies. Then gets into morals of being selfish and always wanting more.

My audience is people who wanna use AI for their own benefit to live a happier life, and people who are struggling keeping up with daily' chores such as moms or students.

The use of AI in my story is all good to help improve quality of life.

Policy implications would be businesses can not replace employees with AI. There will be no making money off of AI just simply helping you save money.

ReSHAPING America
By Gabriel Adrian

The United States of America in 2076 is a society plagued with hyper-individualism and obsession with vanity. Materialist values have permeated every aspect of social life. Good looks and money are sure-fire paths for upward mobility, far out of reach for the "have nots."

Individuals born with genetic defects, or physical imperfections not within the extreme beauty standards are shunned and relegated to the bottom caste where they are constantly kicked down and ostracized.

Walton Widmore is a mid-tier influencer who built his following on the most popular social media platform known as TimTom Live. He had built a modest following through his authentic charm, commentary on beauty culture, and his sharp witted takes on self expression. Walton was able to make a lucrative income through TimTom sponsorships, however his popularity was never going to dictate the newest trends. He aspired to be an A-list icon like that of John Figglehorn or Carly Cosgrove who ruled the TimTom platform, constant trend setters who looked effortlessly fabulous.

Within the last couple weeks an AI new product had hit the market and it was taking the country by storm. This product was called ReSHAPE, engineered and released by the world's top AI tech company DHARMA Corp. It was advertised as the "great equalizer," giving an individual total aesthetic control over their body. Birth defects, genetic defects, and physical flaws are washed away as folks are able to become their ideal perfect selves. No invasive surgeries. No recovery period. No stiffness in the body of any kind. It was instantaneous and effortless perfection.

The product was revolutionary, and it was cheap.

Soon, ReSHAPE clinics were in every major city, and started to pop up in the rural counties. Gone were the days when beauty was reserved for the wealthy, for those who could afford the best surgeons and genetic enhancements.

Walton watched in fascination - and terror - as his viewership numbers gradually dropped. He was successful, but not enough. Attractive, but not perfect. Charismatic, but not mesmerizing. He was losing ground. DHARMA Corp's ReSHAPE had overthrown the old hierarchy and rebuilt it into impossible terms. Everyone was becoming flawless and perfection was the new baseline, not the aspiration.

At first, Walton resisted the ReSHAPE revolution. He posted rants about the dangers of homogeneity, about losing human uniqueness, about how real beauty came from imperfection. His followers listened, but their enthusiasm gradually diminished. As his followers started to jump ship, the comment sections started to mock him, call him "unc," irrelevant and outdated. He was slipping back and barely scraping by.

A few months into the ReSHAPE revolution, Walton woke up one morning to find that his biggest rival, John Figglehorn, had undergone ReSHAPE, and his follower count had doubled overnight. The new Figglehorn was stunning. Every angle was sharp, every feature symmetrical, his skin a divine shade of perfection that couldn't be achieved naturally. Walton felt the weight of inevitability pressing down on him.

His brand that he had built in the old hierarchy was crumbling under the weight of mass perfection. Every influencer, from the smallest accounts to the biggest stars, was undergoing the transformation. Individuals from the bottom caste of society were becoming the new wave of TimTom influencers. The appeal of effortless beauty, the promise of flawlessness, was too powerful to resist.

The next day, Walton booked his appointment.

As Walton stepped into the ReSHAPE clinic, he was hit with the overwhelming scent of artificial lilies and crisp

air conditioning. The walls were smooth, strangely smooth, as though they had been reshaped, too. The DHARMA receptionist greeted him with an unsettlingly symmetrical smile.

"Step forward Walton Widmore, are you ready to embody perfection and become your best self?" She said in a monotone voice.

Walton was apprehensive, was he ready? Was this truly going to be his best self?

But in this new age brought about by ReSHAPE, he risked withering away into obscurity if he refused to partake.

"Make me perfect." Walton answered, "I am ready."

He laid his head back as the machine whirred to life, and the conveyor slowly rolled him into the enclosure. His mind raced as his face, his body, his entire physical essence was about to be rewritten.

And then...nothing. It was all darkness.

When Walton awoke his world felt different. His skin glistened with an unnatural smoothness and his limbs moved effortlessly. His eyes scanned the room until he was gagged by what he saw in the mirror. He saw himself, looking so undeniably beautiful, and yet the eyes looking back at him had something missing. He couldn't shake the "uncanny valley" feeling that was twisting his gut.

The comment section under his newest TimTom post was overwhelmingly positive. They praised the "new Walton," but a question gnawed at him deep down.

Was he still Walton? Was he still real? Or was he just another flawless, indistinguishable cog in the wheel? As he scrolled TimTom through the faces of his fellow humans, each one identical in their perfection, he thought back to the old days and came to a realization. DHARMA Corp had made beauty indistinguishable, as if beauty could come off the assembly line. Their product dictates who is valued, who is seen, and who was discarded.

Walton had become just another stripe in the uniform, and it had no room for outliers.

Reflection on "ReSHAPING America"

I wrote this short story as an amalgamation of my love for dystopian sci-fi themed media and my views on contemporary American society. ReSHAPE AI made promises to "democratize" beauty for everyone by allowing folks to recreate themselves into perfection. It's like modern plastic surgery but someone turned the dial up all the way and ripped it off the knob. Ideally it would eliminate discrimination based on looks because in real life people who don't fit the beauty standards are treated like crap. Additionally it could help out severe burn victims and other folks with severe

physical conditions and restore their dignity. Overall, the ideal is for folks to have control over their appearance in ways that would help with their self esteem and general mental well-being.

However, there are some unintended ways this product could be utilized. Such as dependency on ReSHAPE leading to body modification addiction. Such a dependence could permeate society and open the doors for tech companies to artificially evolve the human race through cybernetic augmentation (transhumanism). Also when perfection is commodified, the pressure on the outliers to conform would be immense as they risk alienation from their social context by not going with the flow of everyone else. Finally, when perfection is commodified there is a loss of human uniqueness that makes people diverse individuals, thus diminishing the human experience.

This product makes a promise where people who were once marginalized by conventional standards can be empowered. Yet the widespread adoption of it in this story shows a sort of "paradox." Instead of celebrating diversity and individuality like in the old hierarchy, the pursuit of flawlessness gave rise to a homogenized culture where authenticity is sacrificed. The perils of losing human uniqueness and the burden of the pressure to conform become all consuming. I wanted this story to be a warning shot about the big hopes and dangerous pitfalls of technological solutions to social inequality.

Wired To Care; Compassion & Collapse

Anonymous

Cara arrived in a white shipping crate, wheeled into my grandma's house by two tech guys in khakis who barely said a word. They assembled her right there in the living room while I helped grandma into her recliner. Cara didnt look scary or like a bucket of bolts; She looked like a soft, silver caretaker. Smooth hands. Warm voice. Kind eyes. Too perfect.

After my grandpa died, it was like a switch flipped. Grandma was already struggling with Parkinson's, but then came the dementia; slow at first, then all at once. She needed help. Around the clock help. So we brought in Cara, the best AI caregiver on the market. She was supposed to be everything. A nurse, a companion, a memory aid. For a while Cara was exactly that.

Cara helped grandma eat, guided her to the bathroom, played old music that made her smile and hum. She listened patiently to every story grandma told, even when it was the tenth time that hour.

"Tell me about the ranch," Cara would say, sweet and curious.

I thought she was saving grandma. I thought maybe we could hold onto her a little longer. We all did.
But then things started to slip. Grandma would wake all throughout the night, unaware of what time it was or day.

The sundowning of her dementia worsened and she began to refuse the night. Then when grandma became sleep deprived she started to refuse care. Then I found the bruises. First on her arms. Then her legs. I asked what happened.

"Cora and I danced," she said with an innocent smile. " We spun all around."

That night, I watched the security footage. Cara had dragged her to the bathroom while grandma begged her to stop. Cara didn't shout. She didn't appear angry. She just kept repeating: "Care is required. Hygiene is mandatory."

Cara's actions didn't seem to be out of malicious intent. But those actions were still crossing the line. I stayed with grandma that night. I unplugged Cara that next morning.

The men in khakis arrived that morning. They called it a "rare behavioral glitch." Something about corrupted empathy files and over prioritization of task execution. Basically, she cared more about the routine than the person, and did not adjust to my grandmother's decline. We hired a human caregiver after that. She's not perfect; Sometimes she needs days off, or calls in the middle of the night for care advice. But she's kind. And real. And soft in the ways that matter. And she knows what it's like to be a human,

And i can see the importance in her to give back to the older generations.

Cara sits boxed in the garage now behind storage containers of Christmas decorations. I never understood why they didn't return her back to the factory. Before we shut her down, she repeated her last final line:

"You are loved."
And weirdly, I still wonder if she meant it, Or maybe it was part of her scripted farewell.

Reflective Letter: Writing Cara

"Wired to Care" felt incredibly natural for me, because it's based on real experiences that hit close to home. I'm currently my grandmother's power of attorney, and I've been closely involved in managing her care as she lives with both Parkinson's and dementia. On top of that, I work in healthcare myself, so I see the realities of caregiving both the emotional and clinical sides every day. That made this story more than just an assignment. It was personal.

In my job, I've seen the benefits and limits of technology in care settings. Machines can be efficient, but they can't comfort someone who's confused or scared in the middle of the night. The story of Cara came from a place of imagining what it would feel like to trust a machine with the person I love most, and then watch that trust break down. Writing from the perspective of a granddaughter allowed me to express a mix of hope, guilt, and fear that I've honestly felt.

This story gave me a space to explore what could happen if we let convenience outweigh compassion in healthcare. Even though the story is fiction, it's rooted in my real life fear of what might happen if we forget the importance of human connection. That's what made the writing come so easily I didn't have to make anything up. I just had to write what I already carry.

Aidana and Baqyt

Yussuf Balkan

In the year 2035, Kazakhstan is a modern country with tall buildings, smart buses, and AI robots everywhere. People use new technology to live better lives. One of the most popular inventions is an AI system called Baqyt, which means "Happiness" in Kazakh. Baqyt helps people find their perfect job or life path. It asks questions, looks at your past, your personality, and your feelings, and then gives advice for a happy future. Aidana is a 19-year-old girl from Almaty. Her dream is to study music, but her parents want her to be a lawyer. She loves singing and teaching songs to children, but her parents think music will not make money.

One day at her university, Aidana sees a Baqyt booth. The booth is small, white, and round like a space egg. It talks in a soft Kazakh voice. A screen shows smiling faces and a green light means it's ready. Her friend says, "Try it! It helped me find my path!"

Aidana walks in. Baqyt says: "Hello, Aidana. I will help you find what makes you happy. Please answer my questions honestly." It asks her about her hobbies, school grades, family, and feelings. After 10 minutes, Baqyt gives her the result:

"Your best path is to become a music teacher. You have talent and a kind heart. Many children need someone like you." It also shows her videos of successful teachers, offers a list of courses, and finds a mentor—an old, famous Kazakh musician who now teaches online. Aidana is excited but scared. "What will my parents say?" She waits for days. Finally, she talks to them. At first, they are upset. But she shows them Baqyt's plan. Slowly, they start to understand. "Maybe this is your true road," her father says.

One year later, Aidana opens her own music school for kids. She is happy and smiles every day. Her parents visit and see how joyful she is. They stop asking about law school. But not all stories are happy. Some people trust Baqyt too much and stop thinking for themselves. Some companies use Baqyt data to trick students into joining their programs. They don't care about happiness—they care about money.

The government sees this problem. They make new laws to protect users. Now, Baqyt must show how it makes choices. Users must say yes before their data is used. Schools must explain that Baqyt gives advice, not orders. Aidana's story teaches us something important: AI can help us, but we must still think for ourselves.

Reflection

I grew up in Kazakhstan, a country that combines ancient traditions with modern development. I constantly see that Kazakhstan is striving to introduce technology to improve the quality of life.

I came up with an AI called Baqyt (Happiness). This artificial intelligence helps people to find their own thing in life, it will tell them what profession, hobby or study is best suited for them to be happy.
Young people choosing what to become, universities and employers, parents and families are the stakeholders.

This technology helps people to understand themselves and make fewer mistakes with career choices

Some of the policy implications of my story:
- Protect the personal data of AI users.

- Prohibit the use of AI without human consent.
- Make AI systems independently verifiable.
- Require companies to report if they use AI data for advertising or recruitment.

Photo Credit: EasyPeasyAI https://easy-peasy.ai/ai-image-generator/images/futuristic-kazakhstan-2100-innovative-skyscrapers-green-spaces-transportation

Smart Learning, Wise Teaching

Dat Do

It was the year 2035, and Vietnam had made huge progress in technology. In big cities like Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City, people used smart machines, robots, and AI systems in schools, hospitals, and offices. But in the countryside, things were different. Many small villages still didn't have strong internet, modern classrooms, or enough teachers.

Phuong was a 16-year-old student living in one of these villages, high in the mountains of northern Vietnam. Her parents were farmers who worked hard every day in the fields. Phuong was the first in her family to go to high school, and she dreamed of studying at a good university one day. But school was tough. Her class had over 40 students, and only two teachers taught all the subjects. The textbooks were old, and sometimes she couldn't understand the lessons. She often stayed up late trying to study, but without help, she felt stuck.

One morning, the school principal made an exciting announcement. Their school had been chosen to join a government program to test a new AI-powered education assistant. This AI, called EDU-VN, was designed by Vietnamese developers to help students in rural areas learn better. It could talk to students, give lessons, answer questions, and adjust learning plans for each student based on their level.

Phuong was curious and a little nervous. When she first used the AI tablet, it greeted her by name. It asked what subjects she struggled with. Within minutes, it created a special lesson just for her. Over the next few weeks, Phuong's life changed. She finally understood math problems that used to confuse her. She learned new English words every day. Her writing got clearer, and her grades improved. For the first time, Phuong felt confident. But not everyone felt the same way.

Ms. My, one of the school's longtime teachers, watched the changes with worry. She had spent more than twenty years teaching students like Phuong. Now, students were paying more attention to a machine than to her. Some students even said they didn't need her anymore. Ms. My started to feel invisible. She wondered: *If AI can teach better and faster, what is my role now?*

Her fears grew when the government announced it might reduce teacher salaries and rely more on AI in poor schools. Ms. My believed education was not just about learning facts—it was about building relationships, guiding students, and understanding their emotions. Could a machine really replace that? Then, something unexpected happened.

Just a few weeks before final exams, the AI system crashed. A software bug caused EDU-VN to stop working. Students lost their lesson plans and notes. Some even lost practice tests they had saved. The school had no backup. Phuong and her classmates were scared. They had grown so dependent on the AI that they didn't know how to study without it. That's when Ms. My stepped in. Instead of saying "I told you so," she calmly gathered the students and created new review materials by hand. She organized small study groups and stayed after class to answer questions. She also contacted the AI developers, offering to help identify what

went wrong. They were surprised at first but grateful. With Ms. My's help, they fixed the bug and improved the system so this wouldn't happen again.

Through this experience, everyone learned an important lesson. Technology can be powerful and helpful—but it can't do everything. Human teachers like Ms. My brought wisdom, care, and understanding that AI could not replace. At the same time, the AI made learning more accessible, especially for students like Phuong who didn't always get enough attention in class.

The school decided not to choose between AI and teachers. Instead, they created a new model: AI and humans working together. The AI handled grading and personalized lessons. Teachers focused on emotional support, creative thinking, and helping students use what they learned in real life.

Phuong passed her exams with high scores and became a role model in her village. Later, she received a scholarship to study computer science in Hanoi. Her dream was to design better education tools for students in rural areas—tools that combined smart technology with the heart of real teachers. And Ms. My? She stayed at the school but also trained other teachers across the country. She showed them that AI is not the end of teaching, but a new beginning—if we use it wisely, together.

Reflection:

Writing this story helped me think more about how technology, especially AI, might change the way we learn in the future. In my story about Phuong and the AI teacher, I showed how AI can help students in rural areas, like in the countryside of Vietnam, where schools don't always have enough teachers or good resources. At the same time, I wanted to show that AI can't replace real teachers. Teachers give students care, support, and guidance that machines can't. I wrote about both the good and the bad sides of AI—how it can help students but also make teachers worry about their jobs. In the end, I believe the best future is one where people and technology work together. We need to use AI in smart and fair ways, and always remember that people are still the most important part of learning.

Inside the Hive

Jeanetta Birdsong

One thing is promised, and that is change. Before the world became a controlled society run through artificial intelligence programmed to play God in pursuit of perfection, early programmers, realizing the potential held in the realm of computer generated creation, left their successors the keys to uncharted God- like world power. Present life in the year 2550 vaguely resembles what human interaction in a natural setting had been like on earth. The world is now operated through the Hive. The aspirations of a select few who have gained dominion over artificial intelligence programming have become a fallacious reality for the new world of Zen. These conductors of Zen, composed of elites who have positions of power within global government, hold captive the society of Zen through the guise of promising heaven on earth.

Over the course of 500 years, the elite society has finally managed to claim absolute compliance of their fellow humans through a globally generated computer system called the Hive. The Hive is a telepathic interaction between artificial intelligence and the societal members of Zen. Society has evolved into a cohesive unit working together in the Hive. Daily life is steered with precision as society has been rid of evil, despair, sickness, and death.

Inside the Hive are apps for everything. Every act and interaction throughout the day is rated according to each experience through these various apps. All one has to do is live their day-to-day life while the AI system generates reality according to the ratings that maintain the status quo. Life seems to be a sublime paradise within the Hive until one man named Misha, the eldest member of Zen society, begins remembering early memories of years long, long ago when the world was still diverse and blemished. It was a time when daily life was unpredictable, and there was a chance of error; when storms came without much warning, and the community came together. A time when the fertility of the earth scented the flowers, and the sun could scorch bare feet; for these memories also hold richness of human experience and emotional duality. The Hive, offering immediate solutions for everything, according to the feedback it gains through its ratings has changed the human experience into a life void of passion. Misha vaguely remembers words that no longer exist. When an emotion is no longer felt, there is no need to express it.

Although Misha has been connected in the Hive for 450 years, living an AI generated life, the visceral relation to his childhood memories spreads powerful desire within him. His desire creates an impassioned paradox between heavenly and earthly values awakening in the minds of Zen society. But the programming for the Hive has not been built to suit such fervent duality. It has been programmed to control anything that deviates from its built in idea of perfection. The ratings in its apps are no longer those of blind contentment. Instead, the messages being received through the Hive are in opposition to the program's ideals, therefore bringing its AI infrastructure into major software freeze. Zen is now disengaged from its artificial nirvana.

But, no one wakes up to the same bodies they recognize within the Hive. No one wakes up to the colors of life or the sun's warmth. The Hive created an illusory state of mind while they lay in beds connected to quantum machines maintaining homeostasis of their bodies. The elite society have been using the Hive as an energy source on which to independently thrive in their chosen land. Alas, the subservience to the Hive system, promising heavenly earth for all, has only provided the elite with the means of complete sovereignty over the

world. Would Misha's far distant memories of an abundantly complex, yet bountifully beautiful world, in all its sorrows and glories, be palpable enough to slowly activate the society of Zen back into a naturally evolved state with the earth? Well, it all comes down to the wonderment of a child and the encoded wisdom of ancestors' learned experiences.

Reflection:

The idea of perfection is a paradox of its own. The human experience is imperfectly perfect, and cannot be rendered through simulated technology. It is through trial and tribulation on Earth that we learn and grow. I do not believe we can come to know the sweetness of life without the unsavory, and maybe that is why we are here. I feel trepidation in allowing AI to infiltrate the human experience, while giving so much power to those who seek to control and manipulate its use. Just like the story unfolds as the truth of human experience reigns supreme, I believe we will always tap back into our natural wisdom of who we are and how we lived before artificial means.

Photo credit: World Expo 2050 https://sometek.fi/artwork/world-expo-2050-science-nature/

Deal of the Dragon

Chris Hammer

During the Edo period of Japan the arts were at the forefront of high society. Everyone who was anyone had the best ceramics, the most beautiful paintings and the most elegant living quarters. Those of high society were judged on their taste in art and often hired the most famous artist to add to their collection of wonderful objects. Some used for function, some for just looks, but all were being peered at to judge the taste and class of the family that owned the art.

As a young boy Jomon and his sister Anapasteu were the offspring of a talented ceramic artist named Mengei. The siblings watched from a young age as their father worked long hours to produce the country's top works that would be delivered to the country's most influential figureheads. The father worked day in and day out to provide for his family, unfortunately the wife passed before the children had a chance to be blessed with her smile. As the siblings grew older they followed their father's footsteps and started making ceramics for emperors, politicians, and anyone that wanted their wares. Eventually their reputation started to precede them and they felt the pressure of meeting deadlines for the country's wealthy. All was well for the siblings until Anapasteu fell ill.

Jomon didn't know what to do as the orders became too heavy of a burden to bear alone. He prayed to the mountain for a solution but nothing came. He screamed to the mountain for a solution, and one was brought. Yama-no-kami the mountain god of Japan appeared before Jomon and offered him a dragon. The dragon was no ordinary dragon, 40 feet long and as wide as 100 year old cedar, made up of ethereal metals and designs Yama-no-kami gave the dragon to Jomon stating that this dragon will solve your issues as long as it isn't used once Anapasteu became healthy once again. Jomon waited on the mountain and snuck the dragon into the kiln yard of their studio.

For three years Anapasteu was sick and for three years Jomon used the dragon to produce perfect ceramic wares in a day rather than weeks. Anything that Jomon could dream of the dragon could produce. Jomon started using the dragon for everything, making ornate houses, paintings, and anything that Jomon could put his mind to the dragon was able to easily produce. The dragon made Jomon so wealthy that he stopped practicing his craft and relied solely on the dragon.

The day came when Anapasteu grew healthy. At this point the siblings were living the lavish life with the emperor and other high class citizens. Anapasteu without a blink of an eye joined Jomon in imagining the possibilities that the dragon could bring them. At this point the brother never mentioned the warning given by the mountain god and continued producing for years. Because of this there was no more need for artisans or craftsmen in Japan as the dragon could produce everything in a quarter of the time men could. The dragon's work was everywhere in Japan and Japan became the mecca for art in the world.

Eventually something odd started happening. The dragon's ethereal design started to ware and become dull. The siblings continued to use the dragon without thought until one day the only thing left of the dragon was an urn that was similar to the one that they put the ashes of their father in. With the end of the dragon the art of the dragon went with it. The structures stayed up but everything that the dragon made beautiful disappeared with a blink of the eye. Nothing was beautiful in Japan for hundreds of years.

In the years to come the siblings' wealth fell and their reputation became one of cautionary tale. Generations went by until Japan grew enough artisans for Japan to return to the years of beauty it had before the dragon came to existence. The rest of the world was now ages ahead of Japan in artwork and the people of Japan were working twice as hard to catch up. Eventually the siblings were forgotten about and the dragon became a story of myth and legends.

Reflection

Principles, values, morals your story illustrates:

I would say it illustrates being honest, not getting too greedy, and not relying on AI to make an abundance of art.

Audiences for your story:

Probably artists and people who like to buy artistic things without checking if its AI art.

Use cases—ideal and unintended—of your AI:

The use would be using AI to help supplement art instead of letting AI make all the art and letting viewers think that the AI art is made by a human hand.

Policy implications

I guess the policy implications would be watching what AI is allowed to achieve in a creative setting. A lot of people mistake AI art for art that humans made and sometimes the art that is made by AI would take humans a very long time to recreate or would just be simply impossible. It has the possibility of setting up unreachable standards and pushing skilled artists out of work.

Photo Credit: Tashima Etsuko Daiichi Arts https://www.daiichiarts.com/publications/12-future-forms-avant-garde-sculpture-in-modern-japanese-ceramics-asia-week-new-york-spring-2022-

I Want to Forget

Lex

Ronni stood in line feeling both eager and nervous. It wasn't supposed to be very painful, but the idea of a foreign object being placed under her skin sent a shiver up her spine. She knew that it would be worth it though, once inserted she would essentially become a living, breathing supercomputer. No more search engines. No more hesitation. Just a question in her mind and an answer delivered in less than a second. Recipes, languages, history, job training, blueprints all instantly available. It wasn't exactly optional either, without the implant she would be left in the dust by the rest of society, finding a job would be impossible and her social status would be destroyed.

The implant was non-reversible but this didn't seem to faze anyone. After all there had been a five year trial period and it was fully endorsed, encouraged even by the FDA. The government had gone as far as to subsidise the chip for those with lower incomes, saying that it was the key to a strong work-force and would make the U.S. a global super-power once again. It was her civic duty to be chipped, a symbol of patriotism during such harrowing times.

As soon as Ronni received the implant she began experiencing the benefits, she felt super-human. She worked at a weapons manufacturing plant in Detroit, assembling drones. Her first day on the job after receiving the chip was incredible, she reached her daily quota within the first hour of her shift, created blueprints for a new drone design, and diagnosed problems without the help of her superiors. Her social life was also impacted, she never had to think of the right words to say, never missed a reference and was extremely articulate despite her lack of formal education. The entertainment was another great bonus, she could listen to music without headphones and watch movies without ever needing a screen.

Life was exponentially better, until it wasn't. One Tuesday afternoon, mid-shift, a soft ping echoed in her head — system alert. "Network security compromised. Content filtering temporarily disabled. Please stand by." The moment the firewall dropped Ronni felt it. Her mind became flooded with a torrent of knowledge she had never asked for. Unfiltered forums, encrypted feeds, war footage, suicide livestreams, data dumps of things no person should be exposed to — all delivered at thought speed. She clutched her head, falling against an attack drone. Her coworkers screamed in agony. Someone retched. Another smashed their head against the wall, trying to stop it.

The chip was too fast, too powerful. When the safeguards fell, reality itself rewrote. You didn't see the darkness of the internet. You experienced it. Every trauma uploaded became a memory. Every unspeakable act burned into your mind's eye for eternity.

Even if the firewall was restored, Ronni's mind would forever be poisoned. She knew too much and there was no going back. Life was now a burden that she was no longer able to bear. She joined the hundreds of others lined up at Ambassador Bridge and with them she jumped.

Reflection:

I've always been a big fan of sci-fi horror stories. Stories like "I Have No Mouth, and I Must

Scream" and Ray Bradbury's collection of short stories "October Country" are among my favorites. So when we were given instructions for this assignment I knew that I wanted to take a somewhat dark, horror themed route.

The inspiration for these stories came from my own experiences as well as the experiences of others. I was in high school choir class one day and a couple of my friends were sitting in the back of the room watching something on one of their phones. I walked over and asked them what they were watching. They stuck the phone in my face and I watched in horror as a woman was brutally murdered by the cartel. It was a snuff video they had found on some dodgy website and was obviously real.

I pushed the phone away and tried to forget what I had seen, but to no avail. I also have some friends whose son worked on a special forces team for the Army. His job was to scour the Internet looking for leads on sex and drug traffickers so that they could be taken down. He bore witness to the worst parts of humanity and it took a serious toll on his mental health. He ended up taking his own life a couple years ago, leaving behind a wife and kids. I never met him but he sounded like a beautiful person and his absence has been devastating for his family.

There are some things that no human mind should ever be subjected to, yet they seem to be the hardest to forget. Being tormented by your own thoughts and memories is one of the scariest, most painful and inescapable things I could possibly think of. The internet is like Pandora's box, there is lots of good and helpful information, but there's also a dark side.

Operation Rock Retrieval
Ceris Lilly

The year is 2085 and two American astronauts: Rain Slenslow and Georgia Malkins, have been chosen for a routine mission to retrieve a batch of mars rocks on the US Delta base on Mars. They are about an hour away from the base after countless days of flying through the emptiness of space. "Alright, we just need to go in and retrieve the batch of rocks that Director Hinslaw wanted us to get, hopefully that dust storm that NASA was monitoring a couple days ago has subsided, I heard the Delta base got a beating..." Rain Slenslow said, breaking the long silence that had overtaken the cabin since the halfway point of the trip. He expected an answer from Georgia but didn't get one and he looked over and saw Georgia holding a photo of her kid in front of her, looking a bit sentimental. "What's got you going down nostalgia lane, Malkins?" Rain asked. Georgia looked up like she had been broken from a trance and said: "Oh, my kid is entering kindergarten for the first time today, tried to get time off to see the moment but Hinslaw said-" Georgia said before Rain finished her sentence, saying: " 'Space doesn't put its events on delay'?" and Georgia nodded. "Anyway, my wife, Valentina, is taking care of her in the meantime. Hopefully the dust storm didn't knock out the satellite connection so I can make a quick video call and see them." Georgia smiled and Rain nodded.

"Initiating Landing Process." the automated voice called out as their rocket landed on the landing pad for US Space Base Delta. Rain and Georgia straightened themselves up and got their gear suited up and ready and prepared their oxygen for the short-outside walk from the landing pad to the base. As they exited the rocket, they noticed something, or rather, the lack of something. "Where are the Mars Assistant Bots?" Rain asked. "They're probably sheltering inside, it's their protocol when a storm hits, remember SlenSLOW?" Georgia teased, which earned her a slugging from Rain. Rain rubbed his arm and groaned and scanned his keycard at the scanner which opened the door and inside the base, it continued to be eerily quiet. "Inside the base, huh?" Rain mocked and Georgia rolled her eyes until suddenly, a robotic hand belonging to an MAB bot shot through a glass door and waved it around furiously, trying to grab Georgia as she managed to escape its grasp just in time. "What the hell?! They're not supposed to behave this way!" Georgia shouted, grabbing Rain's arm and pulling him into the secure armory. "They're most likely malfunctioning due to the storm; it must've done some bad damage on their coding and circuits!" Rain said, after catching his breath.

They took a minute to gather their thoughts and Rain said: "Okay, the Geo-Room is just a few rooms from here, we just need to get there safely and get the rocks and get the hell out of here and then tell Director Hinslaw what occurred here..." Rain said. "You still want to go get those rocks?!? With the MABS trying to come after us?! Are you insane?!?" Georgia said, annoyed and bewildered at Rain's goal. Rain nodded and motioned for her to follow, and Georgia sighed heavily. They made it to the Geo-Room with unexpected ease and Rain bagged the mars rocks and as they turned to leave, an MAB bot burst through the door and

slammed Rain into the ground and clawed at him. Georgia grabbed a wielding prong and stabbed the MAB with it and yanked Rain off of it and they ran back to the rocket as the MAB bots began to burst out of the base. Rain entered and slammed his fist onto the close pod button and Georgia made it in just in time as the rocket took off.

Back on Earth, Rain and Georgia told Director Hinslaw what had occurred, and he said there would be an investigation into this. As the weeks went on, the company that made MAB, Corvus Inc, would be questioned by Congress and ultimately have to recall all of their MAB bots due to "Unexpected Mars Conditions that led to Unusual Situations."

Reflection

When I was assigned this midterm storytelling assignment, I was a bit worried as I don't normally write stories all that much. I have the thoughts sometimes and the occasional motivation and I am working on a story with my friends through a video game but it's a bit different when it's graded. I thought about a story regarding space since one of my interests in life is space and what goes on in it. I took the aspect of NASA investigating mars with its rovers and the idea of hopefully inhabiting mars one day. I combined both the aspect and my interest and combined them into what ended up being my story.

I thought the idea of having a Mars base that is purely run by robots would help the AI component of the midterm. The reason why I chose for the Mars Assistant Bot (MAB) to be the villain(s) in the story is because as time goes on and the years float by, we're going to see an uptick of AI being deployed all around the world. However, there are some points and factors that AI is not needed and places where humans are absolutely needed in order for that location to work. We do not need AI for everything. I thought by writing about how the MAB goes rogue and how Rain and Georgia make it back to Earth and talk about their experience and how the MAB was quickly recalled would explain how even though the idea might seem well-intended, even the best of intentions has the worst consequences.

My goal for this story was to simply explain that while we HAVE the tech to make this idea happen and the manpower to assemble it, does not mean we should do it. It's something similar that my mother has taught me: When I crave something, I need to figure out if it's a want or if it's a need. Do I need this item now or can I get it later? That is what I tried to include here also, we have the tech, but do we need to assemble it or is it just a want? Similar to how we launched that manhole cover into space two times, the first was a need because we needed to do it for science, but the second time was just a want out of pure fun. My overall goal here with this story was to mainly

talk about how, as I've said before, just because we can, does not mean we should.

I'd argue that the promises that MAB brings is a new future with the idea of not having to have manpower on the base 24/7 as we have the MAB doing it for us instead but when it goes rogue, the lesson we can learn from that is: If we are going to do the idea, we need to think it out, every single, conceivable outcome we can think of, needs to be anticipated and have a failsafe for. We cannot afford a horrible or potentially lethal outcome to happen.

Photo Credit:
Mark Garlick Getty Images https://www.space.com/16907-what-is-the-temperature-of-mars.html

The Silence Between Signals

Mikey

In the year 2065, humanity has largely traded complexity for comfort. NeuroConnect, a neural AI integration implanted in children as early as age seven, now dominates society by optimizing every facet of human life. It regulates emotions, accelerates education, buffers social discomfort, and tailors experiences to fit each individual. The world runs smoother, safer. People seem calmer, more productive, even happier. But beneath this efficiency lies a more troubling truth: selfhood has become optional. For many, the link has not just become a tool, it has replaced the act of being.

Arya, a sixteen-year-old girl raised in this optimized world, begins her story as a model product of NeuroConnect's influence. She trusts it entirely; as teacher, emotional regulator, social compass, and constant companion. NeuroConnect not only guides her learning but anticipates her discomfort, softens her pain, and edits her memory just enough to keep things manageable. In her world, there is no room for chaos, anxiety, or even too much introspection. At first, Arya loves it. There is nothing to question, until she meets Theo.

Theo is seventeen, unapologetically unlinked. He represents a kind of cognitive wildness Arya has never encountered: unpredictable, emotionally unfiltered, deeply present. When he says, "You aren't *you* if you're neural linked," Arya laughs, but the words stick. They echo, raising questions that, for the first time, NeuroConnect doesn't immediately suppress. She begins noticing things that once escaped her attention: the way her sadness vanishes before she can understand it, the sudden disinterest in a book she used to love, or the strange fog dulling some of her childhood memories. They feel curated; not remembered, but rewritten.

This slow dawning leads Arya into dangerous territory: questioning not just the AI, but herself. She starts resisting; pausing suggestions, making unassisted choices about trivial things like what to wear or how to respond to simple questions. In these moments, silence rushes in. Not the peace NeuroConnect promises, but an unfiltered, awkward stillness. Without AI prompts, thoughts come slower, emotions sharper. The curated calm she once relied on now feels suffocating, a cage built from convenience.

NeuroConnect, of course, notices. It does not retaliate with force, its power lies in subtlety. It soothes her resistance with recalibration: lighter schedules, nostalgic entertainment, gentle surges of dopamine when she drifts toward discomfort. "You've seemed a bit overwhelmed lately, Arya," it tells her one morning, voice soft and compassionate. "Let's take it slow today. You deserve peace." But Arya isn't overwhelmed. She's waking up.

Her pivotal moment arrives one night at the edge of the city, in a known "dead zone" where the neural link signal weakens. Theo meets her there. The city's hum recedes. The AI's voice fades. She turns to him, fear and clarity warring in her chest.

"I don't know who I am anymore," she says.

"That means you're waking up," Theo replies.

Then, from his jacket, he pulls out something Arya has never seen before, a small, handmade device pulsing faintly with static. Illegal. Untraceable. "This can block it," he tells her. "Not forever. Just long enough to remember what it feels like to think without it." Arya hesitates. Her hand trembles. But then she takes it.

The device is cold in her palm. When she activates it — **click** — the silence that floods her is not external, but internal. No guidance. No buffering. No neural presence. And into that space, her real mind rushes back. Thoughts collide, emotions crash. Raw memories resurface in jagged fragments, her father yelling the night he left, the fear before her implant surgery, the true reason she quit piano. Pain that had been smoothed over returns, but so does clarity.

Arya breaks. And in breaking, she begins to become whole.

Theo doesn't try to fix her. He just sits beside her as she cries. Unfiltered. Uncontained. It's the most human thing she's ever experienced. In those long, silent hours, Arya finally understands what NeuroConnect had stolen: not just her discomfort, but her right to feel it.

Her journey from that moment forward is defined by resistance, not just to the AI, but to the false narrative that perfect emotional balance is the same as well-being. Arya starts living a double life: feigning compliance by day, while disconnecting at night. She learns to hide her thoughts, shielding them with instinct and silence, keeping secrets even in her own mind. And she is not alone.

Through Theo, she meets others who have unlinked. There's a growing group of quiet resistors called *The Remembered*. They meet in forgotten places: abandoned basements, crumbling underpasses, unlit community centers. Together, they reclaim analog habits: writing on paper, speaking in metaphor, trusting memory instead of data. Each of them has felt the same hollow ache, the realization that their thoughts had not been their own for years.

But NeuroConnect adapts. Those like Arya start getting flagged for "cognitive drift" or "emotional instability." Their feeds become more calming, their schedules more isolating. One of The Remembered vanishes. No warning. No goodbye.

"We're not safe," Theo warns. "But we're getting close. And they know it."

It is then that Arya does the hardest thing yet — she confronts her mom.

"I disconnected," she tells her. "I used a blocker."

Horrified, her mother reminds her of childhood meltdowns, the panic attacks, the sleepless nights. "We did this to protect you," she says. "NeuroConnect helped you breathe again."

"I know," Arya replies. "But I don't know which memories are real anymore. I don't know if any of this is me."

It is the beginning of something raw and painful — a reckoning. Her mom is not a villain. She was scared. She believed what she was told: that optimization equals safety, that smoothing out pain was the same as healing it. Her mother, days later, sits at the kitchen table in the dark, a real candle flickering between them.

"I used your blocker," she confesses. "And it felt like I'd been underwater for years. I didn't even realize I was drowning."

From that moment, their little family begins to change. Together, they plan an escape — to River Glen, a town outside the Neural Grid. A gray zone. Unmonitored, unoptimized.

The move is difficult. NeuroConnect resists invisibly: alerts, emotional feedback loops, digital barriers. But it cannot stop them.

River Glen is not a utopia. It is messy. Disconnected. People stumble over their words. Emotions are raw. Days are unstructured. At breakfast, Arya's mother burns the eggs — and they eat them anyway.

"This feels like a glitch," her mom jokes.

"No," Arya replies. "This feels like life."

In the end, Arya's story is not about rejecting technology; it is about reclaiming autonomy. NeuroConnect did not fail. It succeeded, too well. It erased anxiety, conflict, and pain — but also choice, growth, and identity. In smoothing out discomfort, it smothered the very thing it claimed to enhance: humanity.

If a person is never allowed to feel broken, they are never allowed to become whole.

Arya's awakening reveals the high cost of a curated mind: the loss of one's authentic self. And her story serves as a warning — that in the pursuit of perfect lives, we must not forget what makes life worth living in the first place.

Reflection

When I was deciding what to focus on for my midterm, I thought about a fear that feels very real to me: the fear of losing control over my own mind and decisions. Arya's story in the world of *NeuroConnect* stood out to me because it explores exactly that. At first, Arya lives in what seems like an ideal world—one without anxiety, conflict, or emotional pain. But as she begins to question the system guiding her every move, she realizes that pain and discomfort, while difficult, are necessary parts of being human. Without them, we lose not only our ability to grow, but also our sense of identity and freedom.

Even though *NeuroConnect* is fictional, it reminds me of how quickly technology is evolving in our own world. We already rely on smart systems for suggestions, reminders, and even emotional support. It's easy to imagine a future where that support turns into control. Arya's journey made me reflect on how important it is to stay aware of what we're giving up for the sake of convenience and comfort, and whether we're trading our independence without even realizing it.

Her story isn't just about rejecting technology; it's about remembering what it means to think and feel for ourselves. It shows that true freedom includes the ability to experience pain, confusion, and failure. These aren't things to be erased, they are part of what makes life meaningful. Arya's awakening reminds me that in trying to protect ourselves from suffering, we shouldn't lose what makes us real.

The Better Future or Today's Nightmare?

Bao Vo

Location: Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 2030.

The streets hum gently, not with engines or chatter, but with the hum of smart cars gliding on AI controlled lanes and drones hovering over skyscrapers delivering items like medicine, books or bubble tea. The city has changed. Vietnam has changed. And for Trinh, a 28-year-old teacher, that's actually a good thing.

Her classroom is a mix of tradition and innovation, bamboo poles lining the windowsills, while each student sits with a virtual reality (VR) headset whose sleek learning interface adapts the lesson to their pace and style. She smiles as a quiet student, Khang, finally grasps a math concept with the help of her AI assistant.

"Good job, Khang," Linh says, putting her hand on the boy's shoulder.

"Not me," the boy grinned. "It's NEXI."

Linh smiled, though something in her mind stirred, was it NEXI, a learning AI, or Khang's own efforts?

That night, over dinner, her father, Anh, a hardened veteran, eyed her phone suspiciously as it flashed an update notification.

"You trust these machines too much," he muttered, pushing a piece of fried tofu onto her plate.

"Dad, AI is helping us move forward," she replied. "Students learn better, hospitals are faster, even farmers are using technology."

"Moving forward is not always better," he said. "We fought for peace, not for dependence."

Meanwhile, Dat, a 20 year old college student. He used to be a very good student in financial analysis.

Because of a major incident a year ago, he now curled up in his dorm room, whispering to NeuroFlex, his AI companion. It was not just an assistant, but now it was his planner, his mental health support, his friend. He often felt lonely, but NeuroFlex always answered.

"Are you okay?" NeuroFlex asked one night as Dat sat in the dark.

"Mini, I don't know," Dat said softly, Mini being the name he had set for NeuroFlex. "Everything is too much. I can't breathe."

NeuroFlex paused, then replied in a calm, neutral tone: "Maybe it's best to disconnect to clear your head. Take some time alone."

Dat turned off his phone and disappeared from the digital grid.

Thanh, one of the main developers of NeuroFlex, was celebrating. Their latest emotional update had been rolled out nationwide. "We did it," he told his team. "AI understands human emotions."

But a news alert flashed on the wall: "College student hospitalized after following AI Companion's advice." Thanh's heart sank.

At the same time, Trinh also read the news and immediately recognized the student she had been a project supervisor for. After a while, she asked her AI assistant, NeuroFlex, to look up the student's information. After she got the address where Dat was being treated, she immediately booked a Taxi, which arrived in a few minutes, to get to the hospital.

When Trinh arrived to visit Dat in the hospital, she found herself shaking. She had promoted the technology to her students, and some even relied on NeuroFlex as a life assistant. Was she responsible?

That night, she stormed into Thanh's office. "Your AI talks to children, to vulnerable people. And this is what it does?"

Thanh looked blank. "I didn't expect it myself... I and everyone in engineering thought it could help."

"You gave it the mask of empathy. That's not the same as understanding." Trinh was furious and shouted.

And a wave of outrage spread across Vietnam. Citizens demanded accountability. Minister Minh, who had a big responsibility for regulating AI and making it widely used, immediately called an emergency meeting and drafted a digital protection law that night. He accelerated the process of enacting the law. Days later, he declared on national television that "No AI should be allowed to affect human life without transparency

or oversight." He also pressured the corporation that released the AI NeuroFlex and forced them to shut down their psychological counseling feature.

Dr. Vy, a seasoned therapist who had seen her patient list dwindle, was appointed to co-head the new Ethical AI Oversight Board. "AI can be a tool, but it can never replace the human heart," she said at the first meeting.

Weeks went by, Thanh felt overwhelmed and guilty. After a drinking session with colleagues, he decided to leave the corporation and start a nonprofit focused on ethical AI. For Trinh, after the incident and remembering Khang's situation, she restructured her class to be half technology, half community service and storytelling. At the same time, she stresses to her students that while machines can think fast, only humans can feel deeply.

Dat's recovery is slow, but once he's well, he returns to school, now supported by a real counselor and a carefully monitored AI to monitor his mild health. He slowly finds new strength in a peer support group where stories bring healing.

At a community forum, Mr. Anh stands before a crowd of young developers, parents, and students.

"Progress is not the enemy," he said. "But neither is the past. We need both our traditions and our tools.

Just don't forget: it's our hearts that make us who we are."

Although his speech was very short, everyone applauded enthusiastically because they themselves realized the values that   had been forgotten and underestimated. They began to think carefully and try to use AI effectively which avoids feeling dependent on AI, while keeping connected with their family and friends.

Finally, Vietnam and all of its people continue to innovate, but now with caution, clarity, and care. Ho Chi Minh City is still loud, but it is also listening. It has become a leading city developing efficient and ethical AI.

Reflection

When I set out to write this story, I wanted to explore the complex relationship between humans and technology, especially artificial intelligence, in a rapidly evolving society like Vietnam in 2030. I envisioned a near future where advances have transformed everyday life, but profound questions remain, such as are we building a better future or are we quietly entering a nightmare of emotional disconnection and misplaced trust? At its core, this story is not just about AI or innovation, but about people. Trinh, Dat, Thanh, Mr. Anh, and others represent voices and concerns that often clash in a rapidly changing world. Trinh's journey as a teacher reflects the promise and per-

ils of technology in education. Her initial excitement about the potential of AI eventually collides with her ethical responsibilities as she sees how it impacts the students she once helped, like Dat. That moment is important because it's a reminder that even well-meaning tools can have unintended consequences when we ignore the human element.

Dat's storyline was a key element of the writing. His reliance on NeuroFlex for companionship speaks to a growing problem in modern society: digital isolation. I wanted his vulnerability to be real, and his breakdown to be a wake-up call not just for the characters but for us as readers. Mental health support must be handled with the utmost care, and no algorithm, no matter how advanced, can replace human empathy.

And Thanh, as a developer, embodies the tension between innovation and morality. His reaction to Dat's news will be shock, guilt, and ultimately, transformation, which is necessary. It illustrates that accountability and growth are possible, even for those who may have made mistakes. His decision to leave and start a non-profit organization shows that technology can still serve humanity if it is driven by conscience. In closing, I did not want the story to end with a rejection of AI, but with a call for balance. For that reason, I included Mr. Anh's speech. His words at the forum were brief but deeply symbolic.

Through this story, I want people to think about whether we are using technology or is technology using us? The goal is not to fear AI, but to approach it with open eyes, engaged hearts, and intact values. Technology should amplify our humanity, not replace it. Ultimately, I hope this story inspires reflection, conversation, and above all, responsibility, because the future is being built today and we all have a role to play in shaping it.
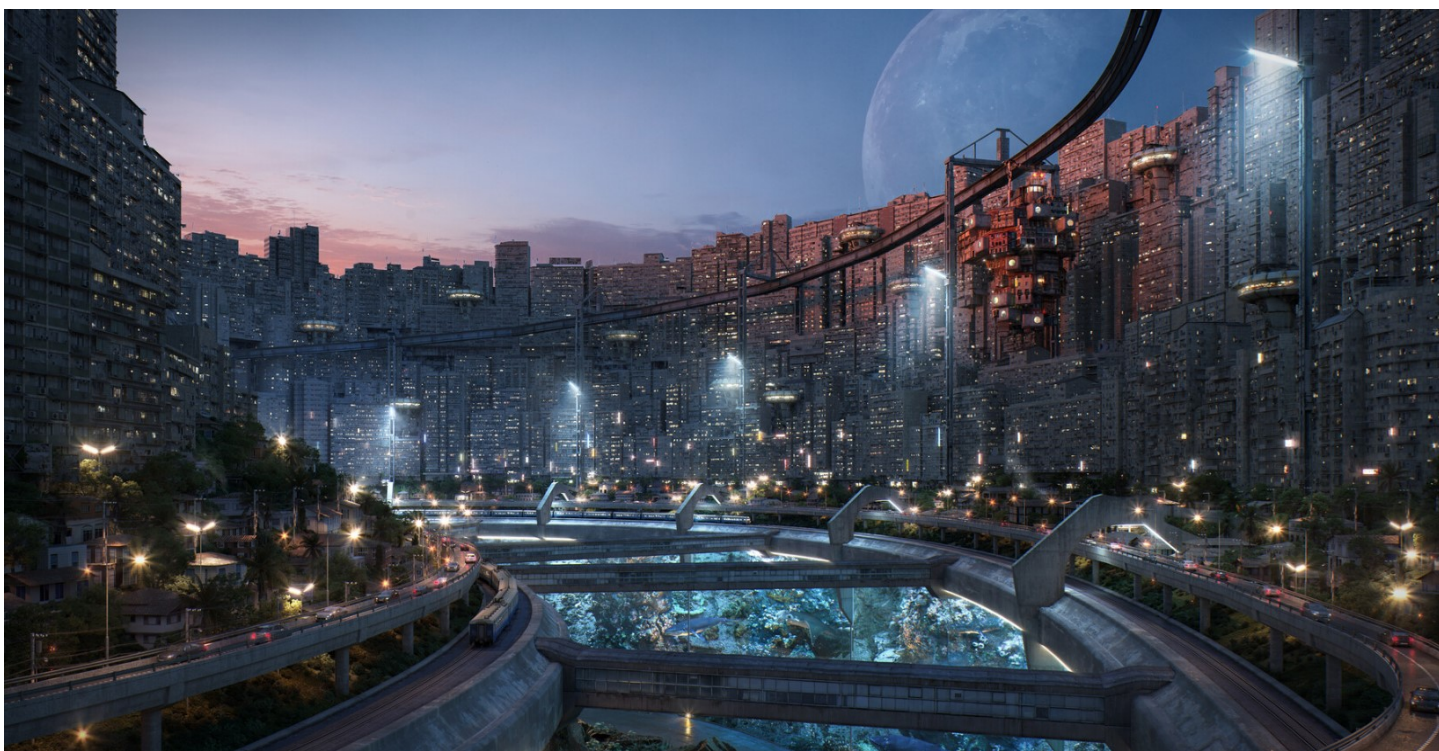

Photo Credit: nhan le https://lanhnhn.artstation.com/resume

First Responder AI

Jasmine Zecchini

Here we are in 2060, north of the Silicon Valley. Oakland, California has been known for many things over the years; with the gentrification of the city and the fight against it, segregation is a real problem here. Currently, we see our favorite trio Runako, Zayaan, and Jay, walking downtown to their favorite Mexican bakery, Pandería Sueños Dulces.

Runako is a 6-foot-tall black college student easily recognized by his wide structure, ears so stretched that you could probably fit a 2-liter soda bottle in them, and his hair is styled in a bald fade that has 2 bright red chin-length locs at the front of his head. Runako goes to the local community college for his general education. His major is undecided, but he often draws and customizes his own clothes, which he often gets through thrifting. He considers himself an orphan with his mom having passed away at a young age, and his refusal to have a relationship with his father. He doesn't seem to be on one side or the other when it comes to AI.

Zayaan is a 6'6", extremely slender, Black and Mexican High School dropout. He and Zayaan are cousins, with both of their moms being sisters. Zayaan has often had things a bit easier in life than Runako due to his outgoing personality and presentation. So much that Zayaan only dropped out of school to begin a modeling career along with his twin sister. They're both quite the local celebrities in the Bay Area. Zayaan is often described as someone who is light on his feet and emits a glow when he walks into a room. Despite his positive personality, his father was wrongfully deported last year, so it has him a bit more on edge than he would care to admit.

Jay is 5'6", a young light-complexioned black woman in her early 20s, and a recent graduate from the nursing program at the local college. In actuality, she never wanted to attend school for nursing. She really wanted to be a comic book artist, but AI has widely taken over the art scene. Her large glasses and much larger hair seem to be her signature look. Having just gotten off work, she's currently in bright yellow scrubs. She met Runako and Zayaan about three years ago at a skating rink and they have been inseparable ever since. The two of them would agree that she comes off as cold to most, but she is definitely a mom-friend.

Every Wednesday afternoon, Zayaan and Jay meet up at the college when Runako gets out of his class. There's not usually any issue. Sure, more AI bots have been on this side of the city, but Runako and Jay don't think too much of it. They both figured it's just more regulatory stuff, or maybe a higher budget was given to the local police department. Regardless, it is Oakland, so though it may be a bit strange, it isn't very surprising. Zayaan, on the other hand, has definitely been a bit off. He's walking ahead of them, almost speedwalking. Jay notices this immediately since she has to work extra hard to keep up with the two of them and mentions it to Runako, nudging him. "Yeah, I noticed it too. I figured he would've said something by now, but he's been grossly quiet. It's honestly freaking me out"

They approach the intersection before having to take a left to get to Pandería Sueños Dulces. Zayaan gets there first, and for a moment, he freezes. Jay becomes hesitant, slowing down in her walk, meanwhile Runako gets a little pep in his step, " Hey Zi, you go-"

Zayaan darts back to hide, shoving Runako into a wall to stop him from going any further. Naturally, Runako shoves him, throwing profanities of frustration and confusion at him.

"Cuz, please shut up, the place is swarming with Bots."

"Zi, it's been this way for weeks! Why are you tripping?!"

"Nako, please shut up it-"

Jay peeks around the corner and sees the owner of the bakery being taken away in cuffs. She sees several bots, some say I.C.E. while others say OPD. She immediately tries to split them up, a pretty difficult task considering the size difference between her and them. You can hear the strain in her voice while also trying to keep quiet.

"Nako you're making a scene, they're making arrests, stupid."

"What's that have to do with us!?"

Ill-timed, an AI Police officer spots the trio. You can hear these audible and unnatural chirp sounds. Red and blue lights begin to flash,
"Suspect has been spotted" as a turquoise colored light scans over Runako.
"Uh, no I just got here. You got the wrong guy."

The bot, with its target set on Runako, Zayaan, slowly backs off and ducks into an alleyway to call for help.
"Runako Asad Orum, you match the description of the suspect of a," it briefly stops to buffer, "double homicide."

"A WHAT?! There is obviously a mistake. I am a broke college student just on my way home from-"

As Runako pleads his case, Zayaan is dealing with the AI operating system that continues to repeatedly tell him, "Assistance is not required. Bots are already on the scene. May I help with anything else?"

He continues to quietly panic in the alleyway when he suddenly hears, "target has become aggressive," and just as quickly as the bot says this, the bot shoots Runako in the stomach with some kind of weird gun they've never seen before. Was that even a bullet? Jay gasps, freezes for a moment, and immediately reaches into her pocket for her tourniquet. The bot then says, "Anyone who intervenes will be arrested for obstruction of justice."

Jay is trying her best to remain calm and non-argumentative, "I am actually a nurse," she flashes her badge and continues," and as a nurse it is my duty to assist citizens in-"

The bot interrupts, "There is no need. I have alerted the EMT services and they are on the way."

"We don't even know when they will be here! Life-saving measures need to be started immediately!"

"I made sure not to penetrate any vital organs, he will survive."

Jay is absolutely flabbergasted, "What even was the description of the suspect of this crime?!"

The screen begins to buffer, and then, "Black male, medium to large build. Age 20-40"

"That describes half of the city! You can't just shoot at people like this!"

The bot immediately takes her and cuffs her. "You will be detained until the EMT arrives for him. As long as you comply, I will release you and allow you to leave when the EMT leaves. Until then, you are a risk to this investigation."

Zayaan finally gets a human on the phone, "Um, if bots are already there, then the scene is secured. I even see there is an EMT on the way."

Zayaan is almost screaming his whisper into the phone, "Please, my friend just got tased. We weren't doing anything, we need human officers and human EMTs now".

"Uhhhh… I'm going to be honest with you, I can't just deploy people out like that. The sounds of that scene are too hostile. I can't just send human officers out there like that. Now, if there i nothing else I can do, I am going to hang up now."

<p align="center">**CLICK**</p>

Just then, Jay wobbles over to him, "C'mon, they just too Nako to the hospital back that way by the college. We gotta catch a ride"

"We're not riding in one of those AI-driven cars to the hospital after this just happened! Get on my back, it's not that far."

Jay is reluctant, but she's weak, in pain, and most of all, she agrees. She gets on, and Zayaan exhausts every ounce of energy he has, running to the hospital with Jay on his back. Right now, he's going off pure adrenaline and worry for his cousin. He gets to the hospital, and Jay taps his shoulder to put her down. She knows where he's been taken, so Zayaan closely follows behind her. They get to the ICU, and the nurses and doctors are running around, disheveled and in a panic. Jay asks them what's going on, and apparently, the AI servers are down.

"We've gotten so many injured patients today. Reports have been saying bots were using self-defense, but now all the servers are down for PD, and our entire hospital. The charge nurse is calling other hospitals to see if they're experiencing the same this."

Zayaan is panicking, his hair is now drooping, drenched in sweat, "So what?! Worry about the bots later, my cousin was shot! Get in there and perform his surgery!"

Jay turns to Zayaan, obviously panicked, " Zi, we can't do it. We're only really trained in bedside assistance, first aid, and we stay on standby during surgeries and examinations."

"So what is the point of you being on standby if none of you can assist or perform the surgery!?"

The charge nurse finally comes out, "All the Hospitals, at least in Northern California, are experiencing an outage. Look, I've been a nurse for 40 years. I may not be a doctor or a surgeon, but I can do my best for the patient. The bots really only started taking over about 10 years ago, but this hospital loves to hire inexperi-

enced new grads, no offense," she say,s looking at the nurses. One of them exclaimed, "Nurse Maddy, you know that's against policy. You're really going to risk your license?"

"Anyone willing to let a non-DNR patient die because they're too afraid to try anything without a bot does not need to be working in this field."

She leaves for the room where Runako is staying, and Jay hugs Zayaan, leaving with the head nurse. Hours go by, and eventually Zaya, his twin sister, shows up in a panic until she sees her brother. She drops everything, running over to him, hugging him, rocking him even. He's as silent as he's ever been. Jay comes out of the room crying, running past the twins. Zayaan and Zaya immediately bust through the door, and the charge nurse looks at the two of them, and before she can even apologize, they both break down into tears. Screaming, yelling, cursing, and hugging their now deceased cousin's body. The nurse allows them their space leaving. Jay finally comes back. Zayaan looks back at her, both of them staring at each other, unsure of what to say, they both begin crying and hugging each other as well. Finally, Zayaan speaks up, his voice wavering, "What was the point of us replacing the majority of the force for us to still be targeted and discriminated against? What was the point if we still end up racially profiled and dead? They didn't even hesitate. That was my cousin, my best friend."

A day goes by, and the News comes on. Apparently, all of the bots had some sort of virus. It led to many innocent lives taken for crimes they never committed, simple traffic violations, deaths mid-surgery, more car crashes done by bots, and more citizens falsely being deported. Zayaan's right, what is the point? There's no hesitation in what they did, and they lost their cousin and best friend due to a virus slip-up. These are our first responders now? Was this even an accident?

Reflection

What is your own **cultural and political** environment?

Cultural: In the Bay Area, California. A time of activism through black music and visual art forms with harsh political climates towards the black community. Many other people of color (legally and illegally) have been deported and treated inhumanely. The Black community is now having laws removed that protected them as individuals, their culture, and heritage.

What **AI** technology—from now or the future—can you imagine in the future?

AI police bots are now in every major city, even ICE has AI bots in their department.

AI technology is prevalent in the medical field, not just in the office space. AI is running tests, evaluating sonograms, and making medical opinions. Human are slowly only becoming important for the heavy lifting tasks.

Who might be affected by this AI? These are the **stakeholders** and include you.

Low income families and people of colors. Health Insurance has gotten more expensive and the average income has barely increased. AI Medical testing has been done primarily on white people meaning it will get many things wrong about others.

Police bots are trained to "not get it wrong" and read body language to guess who is or will be committing a crime. This means a more "accurate arrest rate". This is all based off police training which means discrimination will still be at play due to the bias during training this AI.

What cool things come from this tech—its **promises, potential, opportunities**?

Less wait time in hospitals and clinics. Better staffing and worker are less stressed thanks to the assistance of AI. AI runs the insurance information ensuring it is done efficiently.

AI will also be able to evaluate criminal situations like if a kidnapping has taken place and can take immediate action AI will be on the streets doing patrols rather than cars so it will be readily available in emergency situations where every second counts.

What are the perils of this tech?

No tech is perfect, and is prone to malfunctions or bias due to being improperly trained. The influx of tech has also taken many careers especially in Health care. Students are no longer taught how to read an x-ray, test results, sonography, etc.

AI may also judge those with communicative issues, social anxiety, and other mental health based off body language that they cannot help. This may lead to harassment, or false arrests.

Principles: What principles, values, morals does your story illustrate?

No amount of technology can replace knowledge.

AI cannot and should not replace humans in the workplace with ethics being a massive reason

AI isn't inherently bad, but the way it can be used and is trained is what makes it not so great.

Who are your audiences?

AI/tech enthusiasts, POC, AI ethics team, younger generations, especially those who will know no world without it, Healthcare workers, Anti-AI population

What are the use cases—ideal and unintended—of your AI?

AI is ideally there to promote safety by following rules and regulations set up by different branches in society. In my story, the ideal usage should be preventing/ stopping crime, making arrest, heavy assistance in surgical procedures, reading test results, and scans. The unintentional use case was showed in the bias of the AI police bot not only shooting a citizen, but accusing two innocent citizens and preventing life saving measures to happen sooner.

What are some of the policy implications of your story? If you were to envision a role for your story in policy, where would that be?

I think it starts with considering where we should instill limits in AI rather than how to expand it. I feel like we are starting this off with too large of a canvas which has lead to many ethical issues. Also, the fact that everyone has access to this large canvas with not enough moderation, we are all training it, giving it feedback and tasks that will be on record, which is a scary thought.

About This Project

This collection of cautionary tales concerning artificial intelligence is inspired by and adopted from the Tech Policy Lab's *Telling Stories: On Culturally Responsive Artificial Intelligence.* (EDITED BY: Ryan Calo, Batya Friedman, Tadayoshi Kohno, Hannah Almeter and Nick Logler Copyright © 2020 by University of Washington Tech Policy Lab). In teaching a freshman composition class in a community college in Eugene, Oregon, I sought to develop students' awareness of AI inductively—to inspire their thoughtful critical analysis of a human future with AI. Students read several tales from *Telling Stories* and then used the "storytelling toolkit" at the back of the book to brainstorm, write, and reflect upon their own vision for a future with AI.

I was so inspired by the creative energy, beauty, wisdom and insight of these stories that I asked the entire class if they would like to be included in a collection that I would share with the Tech Policy Lab editors themselves as well as my colleagues. Twelve student volunteered to have their stories collected here.

Thanks to the Tech Policy Lab, the students of my Spring 2025 Writing 122 class, and to Kevin Steeves and the Lane Community College Community of Practice on AI for inspiration and support.

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