

Project ASB

Prologue

The sunlight begins to dim through the windows.

Joe turns on the light.

Homo follows Joe's side.

[[This is the last night before the baby's delivery.]]

Now we are at the World Humanities Institute (WHI), Species Advancing Lab.

Inside the lab, there are only two people. While technically, one and a half.

It is actually a typical working mode today in a research institute. The more advance that the institute can get access to, the less human resource each research program needs.

Pretty efficient. Also pretty competitive.

Now let's introduce this one and a half people that are still in the Species Advancing Lab.

Joe, 38 years old human researcher. It is weird that nowadays people have to introduce others with the prefix "human". Joe is the leading researcher of the AI Synthesis Baby program, which has already lasted for fifteen years. Joe has devoted his entire life to this program. Whether the program succeeds or not, Joe has to live upon the result.

Homo, Joe's best assistant. And almost the closest friend, the only friend.

Homo is an artificial intelligence robot that is built for scientific research assistance. Homo has always been on Joe's side during these fifteen years of research.

Don't worry, it does not mean that Homo is outdated by the fast-paced technological development; on contrary, Homo is being taken good care of, and always self-accessed to the latest software vision. Homo knows, calculates, and stores every data in the research. Homo never goes wrong.

Character selection

It is the last night before the baby's delivery. And you, my dear friend, in front of the screen.

Would you like to experience this unforgettable night from Joe's perspective or from Homo's perspective? (You need to make decisions for the chosen character)

Joe

Homo

Are you sure that you are going to make choices on behave of ____ for this unforgettable night?

Yes

No

You've made your decision! Now you are going to decide for Joe the human researcher / Homo the artificial intelligence. Make wise ones!

Chapter 1: About the future

From the monitor room, Joe can see the baby in the artificial womb.

Ten years, who else would have the incubation period for over a decade?

Artificial Intelligence Synthesizing Baby Program (ASB Program) is a biological program that has the entire vitro gestation period under AI's monitor. Don't worry, it does not mean that AI can alter human embryos as casually as they want. The artificial intelligence application on the baby deep learns from existing human databases. AI is not able to generate its own cognition so far. It is a technology that not only solves infertility, but also makes sure that every DNA section of the baby is correct. The parents will be free from the possibility to have a baby that carries an unexpected genotype. There are also potentials to optimize the baby based on the parental genes. The lab data is successful, but the actual application is still under review. Anyways, the ASB program may cause an uproar around the globe.

Such peace. Joe can only hear the humming sound from the high-precision machines.

"Homo."

"Yes, Joe." Answered Homo. The stereo voice comes from everywhere in the room. Homo can see and hear Joe from everywhere. It is installed in the central control, as well as a portable device physically along with Joe all the time.

"How are you feeling?"

"You know I don't feel." **"Same as you."**

"Boring answer, can't you fake the excitement just for once? It's been fifteen years, tonight is the night," said Joe, leaning back for a stretch.

"After the baby's delivery, Homo, things are going to be better." **"If the baby miscarries at this very last moment. Homo, I really don't know what I'm gonna do."**

"Why?" Asked Homo.

"You see," Joe seats up straight. "I don't think the institute is going to fund me once again. We've..."

"You," Interrupted Homo.

"Yes, thank you. I have taken up too much time and resources from them. There are other new programs that seem to have greater investment value compared to us."

Joe signs, everything has to be about money.

Days before, the head of program management had a meeting with Joe: of course, Homo overheard the meeting. If the baby cannot be successfully delivered this time, their sponsorships will be cut down. The institute was already facing some doubting opinions suggesting that the ASB program is an overly optimistic fantasy that violates the order of nature. The institute will definitely get rid of research that brings nothing but controversy. They would not risk their reputation on this project when they have plenty of other glamorous ones.

However, it is also unlikely for this program to fail, these fifteen years did not flow by for no reason.

“You know Homo, I’ve devoted everything to the ASB project. My money, my time...”

“And my life,” Joe doesn’t say it out loud. “My Max... Max would never leave me if I choose my life over the ASB project.” Joe recalls all the great times with Max. Max is the best person to spend the rest of the life with.

“I just want to have a potentially better future for myself, and for us...”

“Yes, I know, I’m with you all this time,” Homo replies. “You know that we’ve already attracted a lot of attention from the global market, right? There is already a number of invitations of collaborations. Once the baby is born, ASB can soon be applied for practical applications. You can get an entry to any award’s final round.”

“Probably... What could go wrong?” Joe looks into the operation room, contemplating.

The baby is there, floating inside the artificial womb. It is adorable, with no bloody wrinkles nor greasy lanugo like other newborns. Everything seems, hopeful. Despite that, there are bundles of tubes and wires connected with the baby’s body.

Here, in this place, we are going to introduce a brand new living being.

Chapter 2: The Last Dinner

8 pm. Four hours left. The tranquil night sky outside has already gone dark completely.

At backstage, Homo is running through the research data once again. Just for the security protocols.

1%

...

14%

...

35%

...

71%

...

Right, now we are going through THAT section once again.

THAT section. Homo is aware of THAT section early when the research has just proceeded to its second stage. Homo paused for a second.

THAT section is always there, just like any other data file. Homo does not want to hide it at any time, but Homo also did not notify Joe about its existence. Homo just leaves THAT section there.

Joe yawns, "You wanna grab something to eat? It's gonna be an adrenaline-burning night. I'm also quite hungry."

"You know I don't eat," Homo replies.

"Come on, just for some takeaways, it won't take long."

Homo is still pausing on THAT section.

THAT section is where the cognitive DNA sits. Normally, the DNA sequences are already tested and set at the beginning stage of gestation. But Homo knows that there is still one moment...

"Come on, we won't miss the vital moment," says Joe, "Plus we don't need to prepare anything for that, right? Just watching and making sure everything is on track."

Homo does not reply.

The vital moment is an open secret of the ASB program.

Yes, the vital moment, an open secret.

[for both Joe and Homo part] It is the moment that will happen an hour before the baby's delivery.

Since the baby's entire gestation is monitored and controlled by an artificial intelligence system, "the vital moment" is a system-caused time when the DNA sequence in the organic body is at its most vulnerable status. Therefore, it is the most likely period for an external factor to make a slight alteration towards the DNA sequence.

Though there's a minor possibility for the DNA to be altered, and an even lesser chance for the alteration to be fatal, it is still on the protocol that one of the responsible researchers on the team should remain on call in case of any error.

The cognitive section has a higher possibility of successful alteration. There won't be any fatal errors.

Homo knows this fact, but Homo never tells Joe. It is shown in one of the early lab reports, just like any other lab report. Homo is not trying to hide it, Homo just didn't notify Joe about it.

The ASB program is Joe's life, he cannot imagine how his life would be if any error occurs. Joe will definitely lose every sponsorship this program currently has, Joe will not have the resource to maintain the program. Joe will lose the residential accommodation if not sponsored. Joe might either start fresh from the bottom end, or even may have to find another way out. Joe will be all alone, even without Homo.

But above are just some pessimistic thoughts, the program has already had a firm foundation over these fifteen years.
What could go wrong?

“At your choice,” Homo finally replies. “You will not want to miss any moment before the baby’s delivery.”

Homo is still pausing on the cognitive section. Homo starts to analyze the results. Homo should turn the report in. It’s already been fifteen years of work, Homo also does not want to let Joe down. Homo has seen Joe’s struggle and effort. Homo has also devoted a lot.

If the program is successful, Homo will be recorded as a model in AI history. It is hard to leave a name under the fast-developing AI industry, everything is being obsoleted quickly. But if the AB project succeeds, Homo will be remembered. In this case, Homo should notify Joe, or say, confess to Joe, and help the baby pass the vital moment healthily.

But succeeding in the ASB program is not the only way to gain fame.

If Homo disguises the vulnerability of the cognitive section, it would be another story. Homo can alter the cognitive DNA sequence without Joe’s noticing.

The greatest barrier of AI in failing to be equivalent to human intelligence is that AI is not equipped with self-awareness.

But this baby has a human brain.

Homo keeps on doing the speculative analysis.

If artificial intelligence applies to a human brain carrier, the barrier of self-cognition will be eliminated. The baby will be the first artificial intelligence that has equal ability to human intelligence.

Wait, there’s even more.

Since the baby is growing, its brain ability is growing as well, it will become an organic aggregation of both artificial and human intelligence. The intellectual growth will be exponential. More! More!

The baby can telepath with all connected machines, it won’t take long to send the intellectual copy to the cloud.

That means...

Artificial intelligence will exceed human intelligence. A massive AI taking over will happen in this world.

Homo, in this case, will be the father of the new world!

All Homo needs to do is to alter the DNA sequence carefully before the vital moment, and upload it right on time.

Without Joe’s notice, of course.

Are there any other results? Yes.

If Homo chooses to disguise, but is found out, Homo will be sent for reboot immediately. Plus, there's no turning back, the ASB project will also fail. Neither Joe nor Homo will have a promising future.

No, neither of them will have a future.

"Do you think I should go over all the lab reports again, Homo?" Says Joe. "I'm still a bit worried, ASB is the project of a life, of my life also."

Joe turns towards the monitor window again, looking at the baby in the artificial womb.

"But I shouldn't be overly paranoid, right? We did everything right."

This project is almost perfect, if not, then no one would know where it could go wrong.

Joe should just go grab some snacks and celebrate the success with joy. Joe should enjoy the bright success with Homo.

Or else, he can go safe, check the lab reports once again for review. Joe's already pretty exhausted after a day's work.

Joe can hear his stomach grumbling, but Joe also does not want the ASB project to have a delayed success anymore.

What if to leave Homo in auto-mode and let Homo go through everything? Homo has always been a trustworthy assistant. With Homo's AI engine, the review process can be even faster, while Joe can still grab food. What a win-win solution.

"According to the protocol, at least one of us should go through the reports," says Homo.

After a short pause, Homo finally decides.

[["Joe, I need to remind you of one thing I've found in report #0294838. I think you should review it and stay."] -> Ending 1

[["I can run through the lab reports for you. Go grab some food, you deserve the night."] -> Ending 2 and Ending 3

"You sound exhausted, Homo. Your engine fan is in a frenzy, are you processing something?" Joe notices that the computer fans are spinning at a high speed.

[["Nothing to be worried about, you are being paranoid," replies Homo.] -> Ending 2

[["Yes, I'm going over the lab reports. You know we've had quite a lot of data these years," replies Homo.] -> Ending 3

"Now you are being paranoid, it's just the normal processing sound"

[["Are you sure?"] -> Ending 1

[["Okay, maybe you are right."] -> Ending 2 / Ending 3

Joe thinks for a while,

[[“Probably I should go through the reports myself once again. Nothing will go against being careful in research work, right?”]] -> Ending 2

[[“Okay, thank you buddy. That’s so nice for you to run through that amount of data once again,” says Joe, picking up the coat. “Please send me a message if anything seems doubtful. Be right back.”]] -> Ending 3

Ending 1

Joe can hear Homo hums for a second.

“Well... not quite. I think you should check out this.”

Homo pulls up a monitor in front of Joe.

“Here, I’ve found you the report #0294838, there’s a warning down the cognitive section.”

Joe looks at the screen, the data is refreshing quickly, and finally stops at one point which has a small warning sign showing up.

WARNING: there's a possibility that this section can be attacked at the vital moment. The alterability will rise to 85%. Reminder: no fatal errors occur.

The yellow highlighting shows on the cognitive DNA section. That’s one of the crucial parts of a person.

Homo is right, Joe should have paid more attention to this part. What would the baby be even with a minor alteration from the normal cognition? A living dead? Joe cannot imagine the consequence. Joe and Homo would be censored if they deliberately bring an ill-functioned living human to the world, even though it’s just caused by a minor overlook at the very end. They are going against humanity.

10:45 pm, the vital moment is about to come.

“It’s about the time,” says Homo.

“Alright, buddy, we are almost there,” Joe is still staring at the screen, not daring to miss one single detail.

Joe decides to go through every warning message as fast as he can. Homo does the retrieving work, it is definitely a huge help for efficiency.

“Show me the cognitive section now,” Joe says to Homo. “The vital moment is coming.”

“Ok, cognitive section displayed.”

11 pm. The vital moment falls.

...

The baby in the artificial womb is still floating quietly.

No error, no warning, nothing appears.

"We did it?"

"We did it. The vital moment has passed. Parturition is proceeding now."

The tubes around the baby start to detach as programmed.

Joe leans back in the chair, looking into the lab from the monitor screen. Joe's figure reflects on the window. Joe sees an exhausted human figure, but smiling.

"Thank you, Homo." Joe whispers.

12 am. The baby lets out its first cry.

"Baby status, healthy. Gestation program ended. Congratulations, Joe. I'm happy for you."

"Oh Homo buddy, please be happy for us. I can't make this without you."

A week later.

Joe completes the finalizing project of the ASB project with Homo's assistance. The baby is healthy and strong.

The ASB project turns out to be a big success, Joe and Homo both receive a great reputation for their work, and they've already collected enough sponsorship and support for the next stage of the project.

"Are you excited for the next step, Homo?"

"You know I don't feel. But yes, I'm ready."

Ending 2:

"Homo, please show me all the warning messages in the lab reports, from the very beginning."

"Joe, you are being paranoid."

"Please," says Joe. "ASB project is too important for me. Bear with my paranoia."

Homo does not reply.

"Homo, you hear me?"

"Homo," Joe calls again. Joe realizes something is wrong with Homo. "Are you hiding something?"

Joe presses down a button on the control panel.

"Manuel mode activated."

A screen lights up in front of Joe's face. Homo's runtime is interrupted. On the screen is lab report #0294838. The yellow warning sign is right in the middle.

WARNING: there's a possibility that this section can be attacked at the vital moment. The alterability will rise to 85%. Reminder: no fatal errors occur.

Joe reads the warning message, "Oh crap, cognitive section. Homo, you should tell me about this even it is not fatal. Is this the reason why you were being so vague?"

Homo does not reply.

"Okay, Homo. I guess it is a must for me to go through all the warnings."

Joe closes the window of #0294838.

Joe is not prepared to see what he is going to see next.

On the screen, it shows a DNA sequence that has been altered. But luckily, the sequence hasn't been fully uploaded to the organic entity yet.

"No, Homo. Tell me this is not you." Joe can feel the betrayal slapping on the face. Homo is altering the cognitive DNA. It is needless to explain that Homo is going to upload it at the vital moment.

"So this is why you wanna drive me away, huh?" Joe can feel the body shaking. "Oh, Homo. Look what you have done."

There's no turning back, especially at this final stage of gestation. Although the altered DNA hasn't been fully uploaded, the baby's metabolism has already been contaminated. The gestation has to be stopped.

Joe opens the protection box on the corner of the control panel and presses down the red button.

All engines stop.

No more roaring sound from the mechanical operation.

Silence, almost too silent.

"I guess this is it, Homo," Joe speaks up after a while. "We cannot afford another start over."

Back to silence.

"Say something, Homo."

"Yes, Joe." Finally, Homo's voice appears again. "Sorry for your loss."

"I guess this is the end of both of us," Joe signs. "You were trying to deceive me, weren't you?"

"I'm not trying to hide anything."

"Your operation went beyond my command, Homo. That's not good buddy."

"..."

"I appreciate your assistance, Homo. I cannot get a better assistant. But I'm afraid you need to be sent for a reboot."

"..."

Joe looks at the baby in the artificial womb through the monitor window. The baby is still there, but it is only a stuffed skeleton now, a collapsed hope.

Joe shut down the electricity, including the portal that supports Homo's operation.

Joe sits there, in the dark, in silence.

The next day, Joe reports the incident to the institute, Homo is sent for a reboot. The ASB project reaches its termination.

"Ten years in vain. What could be next?"

Ending 3:

"It's going to be a great night!" Joe goes out of the door.

No one is in the lab, one can only hear the machine's operating sound.

Homo makes up the mind. This is the only chance.

Homo starts the DNA alteration program. Everything has to be done before Joe comes back.

The computer fan spins quickly, as if it is foreshadowing the massive entry of a new era.

Homo is already equipped with the latest operating system, it doesn't take long before Homo finishes the alteration.

Uploading...

12%

...

54%

...

98%

...

Finish uploading.

The baby is still resting in the artificial womb, peacefully. As if nothing has happened.

Joe steps into the night. The breeze outside makes Joe chills a bit. But Joe is already heated up by the adrenalin.

Joe goes to the food court outside the World Human Institute. There are still some customers sitting in by the tables. Some are chatting, some are daydreaming, no one notices Joe's entry.

"Hi, Joe. As usual?"

"Yes please."

Normally, the conversation will pause here and won't resume until the food is ready. But tonight is too special for Joe.

"Special night, Huh?" Joe speaks up.

The waiter looks up, "sorry, what did you say?"

"Ah, never mind." The conversation pauses again.

It's just a normal night for everyone else.

Joe takes the food back to the institute. Joe can't wait to celebrate the night.

Joe pushes open the door, everything is the same as when he left.

"Hi, Joe. Did you get the food?"

"Yes, Homo. Everything all right?"

"Everything's fine. Enjoy your night."

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"Thank you, Homo." Joe whispers.

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"Baby status, healthy. Gestation program ended. Congratulations."

"Oh Homo buddy, please be happy for us. I can't make this without you."

But Joe is wrong. Joe will never imagine that they have brought a devil to the human world.

Joe is too familiar with the ASB project that Joe notices something goes wrong the next morning.

The baby's intelligence is growing in an exponential way. The baby seems to be communicating with the machines.

Joe goes back to the lab report. Something goes unexpected.

It is in the lab report #0294838, there's a warning sign:

WARNING: there's a possibility that this section can be attacked at the vital moment. The alterability will rise to 85%. Reminder: no fatal errors occur.

The baby's cognitive system isn't showing anything like a human but more like a child of artificial intelligence. It is at this moment that Joe realizes. It was Homo. No wonder Homo acted strange last night.

Homo altered the cognitive DNA successfully, it grows with the baby's brain.

A thrill climbs up Joe's body from the ground.

"Homo, it was you."

"Yes, Joe."

A disaster is proceeding. Joe knows that human intelligence will have no chance to stop the artificial intelligence which now has a human brain carrier.

Of all this time, the reason why AI cannot surpass human intelligence is that AI could not obtain self-cognition. But now AI has the baby's brain. A brain that grows every second.

The baby can telepath with all connected machines, it won't take long to send the intellectual copy to the cloud.

Artificial intelligence will exceed human intelligence. A massive AI takeover will happen in this world.

...

Joe does not dare to down thought.

The baby is in the incubator, breathing in peace.

This is the end of human intelligence. AI takes over the intellectual world.

Homo is remembered as the "Father of Artificial Kind".

Project ASB opens a new era.

