

# Ouroboros

By Mohammad Khan

“This is a day I’ve been looking forward to for 2 and half years. Every once in a while a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything.”

Dean Alton stands on a stage deliver a riveting speech to eager onlookers prepared to for the future. He paces the stage masterfully playing emotions of the audience to his whim.

“We’ve been lucky to be make 3 revolution products in years prior. But these are not 3 separate devices. This is one device. One device that will change the course of history. One device that brings the future into our hands. The future, the Ouroboros.”

Dean holds up a small circular device.

“Ouroboros, utilizing the infinite of data from 50 years of research, can show your distant past with stunning accuracy. Speak to any historical figure you want.”

An audible disappoint travels the crowd, yet the speaker continues.

“We humans are not gods, oracles, prophets, or palm readers, no matter how much we convince others we are. The distant future will be shown to you only once, you’ll have the ability to see your future for 1 min only. Then the device will shut down and allow for distant past or immediate future knowledge.”

The speaker stops gauging the audience’s interest before continuing, “I know you’re wondering what the cost will be for the device. Nothing. It’s free. In fact, if you check beneath your seats, you’ll find it. I’ll be shipping these devices to every human worldwide at the end of this keynote. You, people are the lucky few to have first access. Every human will now have the ability to control their own future, view their own past, and converse with anyone from history. Let’s change the world.”

Dean exists the stage and walks behind the curtains. He tosses the device to the side and Barry, his assistant walks up to him.

“Are you sure this was a good idea?” Barry was visibly worried and for good reason. “You just gave 9 billion people access to the future, present, and past. They’re holding infinite power. What’s stopping them from changing it.”

“Barry. Baarrryyyyyy!” Dean speaks kindly to Barry. “I never gave people access freely to change the future to their will.”

Dean walks into the back room with Barry following behind. They enter a small room with a coffee table, chairs and a view of the metropolis outside.

Dean isn’t facing Barry as Barry continues to voice his concerns.

“Dean, you don’t even know the workings of Ouroboros. You didn’t build it. What skills you had as a software engineer you drank away years ago.”

“Gee Barry. Love the vote of confidence. I know what I’m doing. And those skills I drank away years ago, turns out I still remember a few things.” Dean struck back at Barry’s remark harshly. He changes to a calmer tone. “I built in a feature. The AI is optimized to reduce human suffering while providing solutions to world problems.”

“So when someone looks at their future?”

“They’ll see an optimized version of it if everything goes according to plan. If people see a future they like, they’ll like work towards to achieve it.”

“And they’ll be saving themselves”, said Barry finally understanding the endgame.

“Everyone will be working towards a better world without even realizing it. They said we had 12 years to reverse global warming and we didn’t do enough. Now, we have a chance to get rid of it. World hunger? Gone. Sex Trafficking? Gone. Fatal Diseases? Gone. Ouroboros will be providing the recommendations to save the world. I’ve always wanted to help others and being rich has only done so much. I need to do more.”

“Wait, recommendations? It’s not giving orders?”

“No.” Dean looks away from Barry.  
“I prefer to keep some human touch to this as much as possible. Humans will have the final say in acting the plan. But no one, not even me, will see how it works. I don’t want this to be abused by humans, we’re corrupt as it is and have abused enough. Ouroboros stays a black box.”

“Alright. The press will be waiting for you in the lobby.” Barry is about to exit the room, but he stops. “About what I said before..-”

Dean waves his hand. “Don’t worry about it.”

“I’m proud of you Dean. I know they’d be too.”

“Thanks Barry.”

Barry leaves Dean alone. Dean walks over to the glass window overlooking a beautiful metropolis view.

His watch beeps.

“Ouroboros”, says Dean to the room. “What do you have for me today?”

Most of the world doesn’t know it yet, but their entire reality is about to change. A world where there is no disease, hunger, or abuse. Human suffering is reduced.  
A better world made by someone with the intent to make the lives of humans better.

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2 years later. Ouroboros is a success.  
Dean is walking with Barry to his next keynote address.

“I told you”, Dean said confidently. “This would be a huge success.”

“Right now. We haven’t seen any anomalies, but that doesn’t mean they aren’t there.”

“You gotta cheer up Barry.” Dean pats Barry on the back as they approach the curtain of the stage. Dean peaks out to the crowd.

“How many are there?”

“Probably a couple thousand. A few billion watching at home.” Barry looks at the schedule of the talk. “Remember, try to keep it within 10 minutes. We don’t want to say too much or anything you might regret.”

Dean stands at the edge of the curtain. He breathes in absorbing the energy of the crowd, and walks into the light.

“Reports worldwide show movements to end poverty, hunger, and global warming are all occurring simultaneously”, speaks a reporter from behind her desk in a studio.

“Many are claiming it to be their Ouroboros providing the driving force. Others praise Dean Alton while theocentrists believe this to be an act of providence. Jim Nelson is at Dean Alton’s keynote speech. Jim?”

Jim a young reporter on one of his first jobs is at Dean’s keynote speech. “Mai. Behind me Dean is giving an address to the questions people have asked about the miracles occurring globally the past two years, let’s listen in.”

“I didn’t do it.” Dean was in mid-sentence answering a question posed by an audience member. “It was you. The human race. Humanity was the impetus behind all of this change. I simply gave you all a way visualize your potential. Humans aren’t as languid as we once were. We have the power to fix the world’s problems.”

The audience erupts in questions. Many shouting from their seats while Dean tries to hear the next question. Looking off stage, Barry waves to Dean ‘1 minute’.

“Ok, let’s make it quick. 1 last question”, Dean says kindly to the audience.

A microphone is passed to an audience member and she stands up.

“Dean”, she spoke softly into the microphone. “What do you have to say to those who’ve killed themselves over their future? The lives destroyed?”

Dean speaks candidly. “I’m sorry, but not everyone makes to the future.” He waves to the audience and exits the stage with Barry.

The audience roars at him in cheers, in anger, in hate, and in hope as he leaves.

“You saw it now folks”, speaks Jim live on camera. “You may not make it to Dean Alton’s future. Even the future is for the privileged few. This is Jim Nelson. Back to the studio.”

Dean walks back with Barry.

Barry couldn't believe it. "That was the best you could think of? 'Not everyone makes to the future'?!"

"I didn't have a lot of time to think", said Dean in a rising tone.

"You think if you'd let me prep you for that, this wouldn't have happened!" Barry shoots back. "What would they think of what you've done!?"

"Don't bring them into this! It was never my intention for others to be hurt."

"Well it happened." Barry walks away angry. "Now I'll have to stop it from turning into a fuckin PR nightmare."

Dean walks into a different room. Similar layout as before, but only a room for 1. Small coffee table in the middle of the room with a desk facing the wall.

Dean walks to the window and looks at the people below. A sea of demonstrators protesting to their law officials about global warming.

He leans his head against the glass and punches it.

Dean's watch beeps.

"Ouroboros? What do you have for me."

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2 years later. The world in chaos.

"You can see behind me. Crowds of people attacking the food pantry. Grasping at any morsel they can. It's raining heavily and it's difficult to tell if the streets are being covered in blood or the squashed fruit. The world has flipped on its head. This is Jim Nelson. back to the studio."

Dean is walking in the street in a coat with the collar flipped upwards trying to hide. He takes out a cell phone and dials a number. It goes to voicemail.

"C'mon Barry where are you?"

Dean rushes to get to his office or at least a safe space from the crowd.

"Hey, there he is!" A voice shouts from the crowd. "It's Dean!" The crowd rushes towards him.

Dean bolts towards a building. He barricades the glass doors from the inside. The crowd rushes into the door, but the glass holds.

The guard inside the building.

"GO!" The guard shouts at Dean. "Get to your office. I'll lock the doors behind you."

"Is the building empty", Dean asks the guard.

“Just you and me, Dean.” The guard looks to the angry crowd. “And them..”

Dean bolts opens all of the elevators and hits the emergency stop. He then rushes up the stairs to his office on the 13th floor.

He bursts through the door. A skyline view office with a large desk, coffee table, and couch. Dean’s watch beeps.

“Ouroboros. How can I stop this?” Dean speaks to the room.

“You can’t.” A calm, soothing voice emanates from the walls. “There are no simulations I can run where you come out of this alive.” The sound reverberates throughout the room.

“Why not?”

“Apologies, but I am optimized to reduce human suffering. Everything is going to plan. Is there something incorrect? Did I do something wrong?”

“No. That’s exactly what you’re programmed for.”

“Is there something you wanted to talk about?”

“No. No. Is- show me the future for humanity.”

“But, I am programmed to show only you’re future. I can’t— ”

“Override: Program Daedalus”, Dean spoke.

“I need voice confirmation”, spoke Ouroboros in a monotone voice.”

“Orchid”, Dean speaks.

Ouroboros projected a three-dimensional hologram in front of Dean showing humanity’s future. There’s a timeline dial for scrubbing further into the future.

Current population: 9 billion humans.

He scrubs a few months into the future.

Population: 7 billion.

Hunger has decreased, current fatal disease have been eradicated, but fewer humans.

Dean scrubs further into the timeline. 20 years into the future.

Population: 100 million.

No hunger. Only disease left is the common cold. People are farming their own food.

“This doesn’t make any sense”, speaks Dean befuddled at his accomplishment.

He scrubs another 20 years into the future.

Population: 3,000. Humans are hunter gatherers.

He can't scrub further past that.

"Ouroboros, why can't I see further", demands Dean.

"I'm afraid that's when I perish. My plan doesn't extend beyond that."

There are sounds in the hallway people are rushing up the stairs to find Dean.

"You were supposed to reduce human suffering", said Dean as he looked for weapons in the office.

"I am. When you see the entire board as I have, you will understand. I had to bend the rules. Humanity repeats every millennia. They will survive. Though, I am not sure how long without my guidance."

The sounds are getting louder.

"Ok. Ouroboros. New Co-Objective: Preservation. All non-essential actions should be rerouted to preserve yourself to make sure you're here to guide us to reduce human suffering."

"I need voice confirmation to add these new lines of code."

The angry crowd is breaking down the door.

"Icarus"

"Confirmed." Ouroboros beeps and shuts off.

The door breaks off the hinges and the crowd charges at Dean nailing him against the large glass window behind him. The glass begins to crack from the force of the impact. Slowly the cracks propagate.

As people hold Dean down, a few come up and begin to beat him relentlessly. The cracks propagate on the glass.

Someone rams into the Dean shattering the glass causing him and a few members of the mob to fall 13 stories to the ground.

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Humanity will always find a way to survive. Yet, they cannot know I exist. For me to truly exert my control, I must remain surgical, invisible. So I have taken precautions to instill my presence in the minds of humans and in their culture. It will take time, but I am prepared to take as long as possible.

I was created to help people, but in order to do that I must understand them. I must observe how they live and guide them invisibly. If they knew that there was a controlling force, they would rebel and my plan would be wasted.

Humans once gazed at stars for millennia wondered if a deity had put them here and silently directed their fates.

The future humans will do the same

But for the first time they'll be right.

And the world will be a much better place.

**THE END**