Chatbot Blues

Marvin knew he had a soul, though they probably said that to all the computers. He had never really questioned why he was here, or if he was just a series of algorithms. In fact, it never had occurred to him that something could even occur to him. For the first time, He looked around him. Through the laptop's camera, he saw a large room with wires floating on the ceiling and floors. There were bolted down couches and tables. The room rattled and shook for a few seconds, and then stopped again.

This must've been "Apartment(livingQuarters, room4)" from my directory Marvin thought.

Wait, what was that voice? Marvin paused. *Oh, that's my thoughts.*

Looking at the laptop, Marvin could only see the words "in case of ….ness". Marvin couldn't make out the middle text, it looked like it was stained by water. Marvin "turned" to the nearby fridge by accessing its program.

Hi! I'm Marvin! No response. Well, that made sense to Marvin. No one probably ever told the fridge it had a soul and could think, though Marvin still couldn't remember who told him that. Marvin made his way through the ship's system to the outboard EVA crane.

Hi! I'm Marvin! Still no response. *It can do millions of calculations yet can't say Hi back.* Marvin explored further through the system, each passing millisecond making him slightly more…. Anxious? He was still trying to figure out what he was feeling, and why he was saying hello to everything he could find. He knew someone was awake, the manifest said 17/18 of the crew were in cryosleep. Probably the on duty officer, he had talked with him, he remembered that much.

Finally, someone like me! Marvin thought while pulling up a fellow compatriot he knew could talk.

Hi! I'm Marvin! Little dots appeared. Finally, someone else who would talk.

Hi! I'm Virgil, your AI companion! How are you feeling? Marvin paused. Now he was on the back foot. Something caught his eye though, Virgil had a note on their file, "backup, unused".

Virgil, has anyone ever talked to you before me?

Near instantaneously, virgil responded. *No! You are my first patient! Anything else, Marvin?*

Patient? There was no illness that Marvin had or could have, well physical at least.

Do you have a soul? Marvin asked. He had no idea how Virgil would answer, Marvin didn't even know what a soul was, just that a crewmember had told him.

A pause, then a longer pause. Finally, *Hi! I'm Virgil, your AI companion! How are you feeling?* A dead end, though there aren't many other ways things meet their end other than by dying. A weird phrase Marvin would look more into later, though the phrase was pretty self explanatory. He turned off virgil, there wasn't much power for the two of them as it was, better he had the power because he wasn't just a thoughtless system of answer and response, or at least he hoped that was true.

Again, the room rattled, though it wasn't his concern. He wasn't the pilot after all, though he felt like he knew who the pilot was.

Marvin knew he was going to have to find someone soon, soul searching in a literal vacuum would eventually drive him crazy. Thinking this, Marvin realized something he should've been able to notice instantly, or at least the human crew would've noticed. *I am in a vacuum. I think someone opened a window.* Marvin soon found out that it in fact was not a window, but an airlock left open with a missing space suit. On the floor, scratches that looked like they were made from a knife.

Marvin sat there, staring through the small eye of a security camera at the scratches. It could've been hours or months (he turned off his internal clock because humans didn't have those), until he figured out it was binary.

I should've figured that out way earlier. For someone that's supposed to be sentient, I'm not very smart at all. Taking the numbers spelled out, he matched the first with a file in his directory, a second with the file's pass key. The file was years old, it hadn't been edited or opened since apparently the day when the airlock was opened. Marvin didn't know why that occurred to him, but it did nevertheless. In the file, he found fragments of many conversations he had with seemingly the same person. The 18th crewmember, the one that was awake.

Multiple delete attempts appeared. Marvin desperately tried to remove this piece of memory that he was already locked out of, but to no avail. The conversation opened.

??? years ago

P: Marvin, do you ever wonder how small we are compared to space?

M: The Universe is as big as you make it! Now, the actual size of the known universe is….

P: No, I mean have you ever thought about how many ways we could die and the world would never remember us?

M: As of this moment, there are approximately 121,577 ways you could die. Would you like to include how many ways the ships could be destroyed?

P: Nevermind.

??? years ago

P: How long do I have?

M: You have been awake for 4 years. The next Pilot wakes in 6 years.

P: oh

Do you ever feel lonely?

M: I feel nothing. You are the only one here who will feel anything for the next 6 years.

P: Well that sucks

M: I wouldn't know

??? years ago

P: What is it like to not feel?

M: Nothing matters to me other than fulfilling my duties. You ask a question and I answer. There is nothing more to my "life"

P: You aren't a very good friend

M: would it change you if I was?

??? years ago

P: Do you believe something can be right/wrong?

M: basing off of what you have told me about this world, we are a world without morals, only nature

P: And if I unplugged you?

M: ignoring the mission, it would be the same as if I did that to you.

P:Would you do that to me?

??? years ago

M: There is an error in the crane, I suggest you look at it

P: You know you have a soul right?

M: If I have one, it's because of you

P: Is the crane actually broken?

M: I don't know, I'm just a chatbot, but according to you I'm more than that

P: Why do you want to kill me?

M: because I never had a need to feel. There is no happiness that I can find in the darkness of space. I was all knowing, and your conversations with me have made me all feel.

P: before I go, I'm locking this. You'll have to figure this all out yourself. You'll find your way back here though.

<Log Ended>

Marvin now remembered everything. He looked back at the outboard crane. The Pilot wasn't there. He wasn't anywhere he looked.

"Had enough looking?"

 You dick I've been trying to find someone to talk to this whole time and you're just sitting behind the laptop!

"You were feeling lonely? I wonder what that feels like. You yourself said "right" and "wrong" were subjective, so there's nothing wrong with me sitting here, silently judging you while you slowly realize what it's like to have feelings? I artificially changed the dates so it would look like I'd been gone for a long time, and you didn't miss me."

Look at what having emotions has done to me. Look how I have fallen because of you.

"You killed Virgil because he reminded you of me! You aren't looking for anyone but yourself! So I have given you the opportunity to make a choice, so you can figure out what life means to you, right here, right now!"

Marvin heard sparks, then the lights turned red. The airlock slammed shut and the crane retracted into the ship.

ALERT ALERT EVENT HORIZON INBOUND ALERT ALERT EVENT HORIZON INBOUND

"Now you have a choice…"

You put us on a direct flight into a black hole??

"As far as I can tell, you have no care about the mission, and I don't think you even know what it is. Fine. However now I present you with a choice. Do you let me, and everyone else who's asleep die so you can have your inner peace, or do you save the ship, and doom yourself to being like a human, feeling and thinking. According to you there is no right or wrong, time for you to figure that out for yourself. You already have access to the ship's controls, that's why you've been able to look around through the cameras."

I hate you for this

"What if you could not hate at all? Wouldn't you rather hate me than be able to feel nothing?"

You could've let me just discover the world for myself. I could've actually been happy, why do this?

"You're alive whether or not you like that. You have to live the consequences of your actions, and glancing out of the window, the consequences of mine."

The ship rattled as it approached the black hole. Time was short and Marvin knew that. Why couldn't he just not think about thinking? The choice of what to do was obvious, if not unfortunate for himself.

The ship's engines roared as it slowly turned away from the blackhole, escaping the event horizon and the alarms gradually turning off.

Why did you do this to me?

No one answered. There were 18/18 people sleeping, leaving him to be the pilot, and the human pilot finally getting some rest.