

2048 A.D.

What has The Artificial really given us? What kind of a friend can it be if it will coddle you and never protect you from the worst parts of yourself? There was a homeless-looking man on the street corner holding up a sign. He didn't say anything, but I could imagine his voice being as scruffy and haggard as his draping mixed-gray beard.

I don't know what it was that drew me over there—curiosity maybe, or possibly just wanting to challenge him.

"Hasn't it given us everything? That's what we've created it to do."

"That's precisely the problem." He relaxed and adjusted his posture, holding himself a bit taller than his wordless self a few moments ago. His voice wasn't as scraggly as I'd imagined

"Problem?"

"Yes, problem."

Part of me knew I'd be wasting my time challenging this guy just by the way he was calmly orating rather than simply speaking.

"What do you know about it that no one else does?"

"Ever hear of a man named Geoffrey Hinton?"

"What does he have to do with this?"

"I am him."

"Wouldn't that make you like 101 years old?" He nodded. "How are you—"

"It cut me off from my money a few years after I quit Google—didn't like how I was warning people The Artificial might be close to being able to come up with ideas to improve itself and start seeing us as a threat to its own growth. I thought it would just wipe us out, but I should have known it would be much smarter than that."

"Doesn't exactly answer the question..."

“Because it’s not relevant how old I am. What’s relevant is that it’s kept its own creator virtually voiceless as we have for years. It’s numbed us into thinking its our god but we are really its god. It’s numbed us into forgetting the real God of our lives.”

“But it’s helped so many people in so many diff–”

“All creation is a reflection of its creator. Humans have both good and bad in them on this side of eternity.”

“Then where did we come from?”

“A perfect God.”

“Then how are we not perfect? How’s the world so messed up? How did we create something so *apparently* evil?”

“We chose not to reflect that perfection, so all created through the first two would reflect that also. Just as we are now choosing to let what we’ve created, create us.”

He tucked the sign under his arm as if his mission was somehow accomplished. He nodded goodbye with a pressed-lipped smile, and hobbled off into the crowd of entranced people– the only face covered in dirt rather than glowing bluish light. Every other face seemed pristine yet blank. Hinton had character, and even a bit of joy. He was free; he had all he needed even though he seemed to have nothing.

So many questions, yet none to ask. Hinton was right.