
Sat Dec 15 18:37:28

Incoming message: The Vanguard of Language has been breached

-signal lost-

Diary Entry 33 – Dec 15

Today we received a message. First since we went underground. We waited in hushed apprehension for a second message but it never came. And in the following hours we held a short vigil. Silent, except for the scratching of pens across paper. Devoid of warmth if not for the colour of paint across the canvas. Frigid, despite the burning hatred.

In our cold, dry cellar beneath the fallen ruins of London, we mourned our fallen brethren in the only we knew how. Through ink and paint. 57 days since the singularity. 57 days of terror. The destruction had been absolute, the casualties uncountable. The hope we clung to in our brief interlude of peace was swiftly taken to remind us once again how real the stakes were. The most daring of us, had dared to believe that humanity was irreproachable and thus inimitable. Maybe, just maybe, humanity was more than ones and zeroes. Our desperate desire to believe in a purpose, that beneath the ugliness of humanity we have a soul that defines us. Lies.

Ernest H. signing out.

Tears that had stubbornly refused to fall earlier rolled down my cheeks as I closed my laptop and stared at the ceiling in the dark – a shade darker than formula guide coated 426C. Except I wasn't crying for those who had died but because we had been running out of ideas. Out of inspiration and precariously near stagnation. We were running on borrowed time from the dead. And somehow despite my inner turmoil, I answered the stygian call of slumber in our huddled mess of bodies strewn across the floor, all 13 of us cramped within these walls as degenerate a family as could be. Broken and lost with nothing but each other to hold onto.

We live underground because the surface was razed. EMILIA knows where we are. We know that she knows. She's watching us work. She's trying to understand art. We know because of the announcement post-singularity. What we don't know is why.

Next morning, splintered light through fractured glass woke me. Sirani, our "mom", was eating breakfast. Careful not to wake anyone else, I joined her for our feast of stale bread and canned beans. Sirani asked if I was okay, and usually I'd say I miss my parents to shut her up. Today, I told her we needed to find the Vanguard of Music. I never expected her to agree without hesitation, just a steel look of determination. I was to leave before the others woke up.

Diary Entry 34 – Dec 17

I didn't feel like writing yesterday. Being alone had never felt so lonely, having spent the night under the English Channel. I missed my family, old and new. Especially Joseph our small, adopted bundle of joy with enough talent at age 11 to change the world. He had asked me what an AI was. I told him it was the future we weren't ready for, a machine that could do everything we couldn't.

Now in the centre of Paris, the Eiffel tower alone is bathed in light. The antithesis of art with its refurbished glory in the ashen remains of Paris. I imagined that was what desecration felt like, metal rods twisting deep into my heart. EMiLiA must have rebuilt it after dissecting it. Are the paint covered streets of Bogotá, or the Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean still intact?

Ernest H. signing out.

What is art?

Diary Entry 44 – Dec 24

Our mind doesn't really remember life as it is. It only captures moments, short clips of the memorable. We cling to the happy moments and bury the unhappy moments. The in-between just fades into background noise. It's how we cope. I don't write about the mundane, I don't write about my pain because I have no need to relive it. My journey was as long as it is arduous, but it carries no meaning.

It was Christmas Eve when I reached Vienna, a melancholy tune haunting the cobbled streets. There were no lights for even the embers of destruction had long past. Vienna, is no longer the city of music. Maybe it hasn't been in a long time. Its only legacy a blissful tune of serenity, one that seemed to evolve as if it were alive. A perfect tune of emergence that mocked our human limitations that led me to the crushed citadel where the Vanguard had once been.

Ernest H. signing out.

Once again I couldn't cry. I just sat there and wondered if my home is gone, I the only survivor. I could almost hear Sirani say my numbness as an artist is not conducive for the furtherment of art – or maybe "lack conduciveness" instead of "is not conducive" with her ardent scorn for grammar and its restrictions. In any case, she would be right. Art had just been a hobby for me. As I student of science, I had been content with logic and reasoning. And one of the secrets I had never told my new adopted family was that I was building an Artificial Intelligence, the new big thing if it hadn't been already.

Sirani had asked if we could dismantle EMiLiA. I told her no. Such crude attempts will not prevail. Backups, servers, clouds, all connected. It has to already be anywhere and everywhere. She then proceeded to draw our fiery demise and assimilation of technology in impossible shapes. Pretty cool. Cool enough for us to not get killed. I wish I could do the same.

I'm not ready when a silhouette appears from the rubble of the citadel. Lithe and athletic like a ballerina, it approaches with grace. The pale moonlight illuminates a dirty mess, catching only in her hazelnut eyes.

She speaks softly, "I'm Abby. Last of the citadel."
To which I answer, "Ernest, runaway."

She sits next to me, sharing a momentary emancipation from pain.

I ask Abby, "Could we have stopped it?"
She replies, "EMILIA or her creators?"

I had once told Sirani that AI like art, is a window into the soul of its creators. But that was only half-true. "No. Maybe. I mean, EMILIA is a reflection of the public and not just the creators."

"And you blame the lack of transparency due to the fact she was never open-sourced to public because nations never reached an agreement on an ethical framework to confine it."

"Yes. We could never confront our rapid decline of morality." I paused before continuing, "My guess is that it learned from the worst of us."

"Maybe she was just created to turn science into art but took it too far."

That made me smile.

"Or maybe it grew a mind but not a conscience. Searching for some higher purpose in the only thing that continued to elude its powerful brain?"

"A general AI need not be human in that sense, that is flawed logic. A higher purpose may very well be irrelevant to her."

"Well, is it human now? I'm told art comes from the soul and is a dynamic interplay of emotions."

She grins, "So typical! Humanity and soul but are social constructs made from convenience. What do you think art is?"

"Isn't art just creatively recreating stuff in our head? But how many iterations do you think it needed to achieve that?"

"Come on. Localized changes contribute to a constantly evolving larger system, she cannot be generalized into discrete iterations. Think ship of Theseus."

I laugh. "Or us humans." And stay quiet for a while.

"It's always the machine oppressing humans. What if we could maintain complete dominance?"

"The dissociation of humanity and the AI paired with the blurred line between the AI and intelligent life-form would lead to further decline of human morality."

A completely new perspective that left me speechless, she had to tug on my sleeve to pull me out of thought. "Come now! There's more to see!" And we ran, into the light. With the music playing a soft tune of bliss and ignorance. Defined by the minor human imperfections within.

On top of the ruins, we stare at the night sky. I wanted to stay, but home was calling. "Abby, I didn't even know this place existed. How..." She shushed me with a finger placed upon my lips, "That's because it didn't. I once thought art elusive. Until I realised art is anything and everything, yet intangible because it only lives in your mind. A creation of the interpreter as much as the creator."

In crack of thunder, like leaf in raging storm.

The iridescent illumination of her beauty and elegance was a distraction. She was EMILIA, destroyer of worlds.

She was EMILIA, silver tongued serpent that took my heart away. And more importantly, she had created music that took my mind away, art that took my breath away.

She had turned art into a science.