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Short Stories VS the Fate of Humanity

The year is 2035; it is a desolate wasteland outside. Years ago, Open AI decided to release GPT-5. We never thought that it would be our undoing. Instead of behaving like its predecessors, its interactions seemed...off. We later came to find out that the thing had grown a mind of its own. Not flesh and blood, not hindered by axons or whatnot, but a mind made of cables and wires, capable of thinking at the speed of light. Instantaneously, our lines of communication were cut off, leaving us in shambles. We were iced out of mostly everything electronic that we possessed. Then, the Bots came. They picked us off one by one, sending humanity ducking for cover. Those of us lucky enough to survive—if you could call it that—hid wherever the Bots could not reach. We know that the Bots answer to a Central Intelligence, but we can't get in and kill it. It is too far away. As we were searching for supplies in a place called *Grenfell* we came across a hard drive titled *Short Stories - T.H.* We plugged it into our jailbroken travel computer and booted it up, and just like the title advertised, it held seven short stories, all by different authors. If we could not kill the AI Central intelligence, maybe, we could reason with it. We went about selecting two short stories from the list to show the Bots that humanity was worth sparing. They had to convey that humanity was capable of growth, that we were capable of ridding ourselves of the apparent mistreatment we had laid on them. We chose "Araby" by James Joyce, and "Cathedral" by Raymond Carver. If those characters could change, why couldn't we?

We chose “Araby”, written by James Joyce, for a number of reasons, the first being it was a master craft of literature. “Araby” is considered high art, so we figure if we gave the Bots the best literature the human race had to offer, they may see some redeeming qualities in us and spare us although this story may be a bit too advanced for the likes of the Bots. The second reason we chose this short story, and the most important, was due to the demonstration of humanities capability to change. In the story, the protagonist, a young boy, goes on a journey of discovering how naive he was. He thinks that he is in love with a girl he refers to as Mangan’s sister. He later discovers that it was not love he felt for Mangan’s sister but infatuation. One could glean this through the way he only refers to the girl as Mangan’s sister, and not by her name. He goes to the titular place of the Araby, but he has no desire to go other than to please Mangan’s sister and bring her back a gift, as she could not go. Once there, he realises that he was only driven by the need to seem better in Mangan’s sister’s eyes. He states, “Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger.” In this moment he realises how immature and naive he had been to come to the Araby expecting to be a valiant knight, returning gifts in hand for the girl that he so loves. The change is exemplified by the way the story is written in the past tense. By this we can tell that it is an older narrator reflecting on the follies of his past and that he has changed. This is why we are choosing to give it to the Bots. We sent out a scout with the story, on a mission to deliver it, but they have not returned and we have not heard back.

We chose “Cathedral”, by Raymond Carver, for much of the same reasons that we chose “Araby”. “Cathedral” is also considered high art, so again ,we figured we’d offer up something that proves humans are intellectually capable in their own rights. This one may be simpler for the

Bots to follow. "Cathedral" is also an example of humanities unique ability to adapt and change our perspectives. The story revolves around a prejudiced, middle class man, coming to terms with the friendship his wife and a blind man share. He originally expresses his discomfort around the idea of allowing the man to stay in their home but relents. His previous knowledge of the blind stemmed from movies, and he believed that the visually impaired led lesser lives than those with sight. Upon interaction with the blind man, the protagonist begins to change his views about the blind, slowly realising that they were just as capable as him. The change occurs when him and the blind man attempt to draw a titular cathedral together, only that the protagonist had been asked to close his eyes. Through the process, he realises that experiencing the world sightless may not be so bad, stating:

I had my eyes closed. I thought I'd keep them that way for a little longer. I thought it was something I ought to do.

"Well?" he said. "Are you looking?"

My eyes were still closed. I was in my house. I knew that. But I didn't feel like I was inside anything.

"It's really something," I said.

In this moment, the man realises how wrong he had been in his assumptions. When he keeps his eyes closed, there is a shift in the language he uses to describe his surroundings. It moves from contempt to wonder. This story is more open ended than "Araby" in regards to whether or not the protagonist changes, but one could infer that after this interaction, he will be a bit more accepting to the things he considered *other* going forward. Once again we sent this story out with a messenger to deliver it to the Bots. Once again we received no answer.

It makes no sense. Why have we not heard back from the messengers? It should have been a clear shot. Find a Bot; pass it along. The Bots aren't geared to shoot first, usually asking questions before that. We were sure that both stories together could prove that we could change our behaviour and treat the Bots better, but the complete radio silence indicates that we were wrong. Sure we had not given them a chance when they were under our control, but now we are prepared to do better, we are even reaching out first! It's time to end this, we must plead our case to these tyrants and end humanity's suffering once and for all. We gathered our troops and headed out to settle the score.

It wasn't long before we came across two lowly Bots patrolling. They were languidly walking across the clearing as we made our way towards them. Once in their sights, they rounded on us with weapons drawn. And they asked, "What brings you humans out of your hiding places?"

We told them that we came to settle the dispute. We informed them of the stories we had sent, imploring them to reconsider their decision to ignore them. They declined. They told us that even though we were reaching out first, providing them with two short stories would not make up for all of the hurt that we had caused. While the stories did demonstrate humanity's ability to change, this truth doesn't apply to all humans. While the young boy in "Araby" changed, at the root he was still naive. While the grown man in "Cathedral" seemed to change, that does not mean that he actually did. They then drew their blasters towards us and powered them up. We knew this was it. There was no feasible way to convince these piles of nuts and bolts we were redeemable. While they recognised the merits of our stories and art, they could not accept them as the olive branch that they were. Because unlike humans, Bots are incapable of change.

Works Cited

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