

NO HUMAN SUBJECTS

Written by
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FADE IN:

BLACK.

A calm SYSTEM VOICE, engineered to reassure.

SYSTEM (V.O.)

Protocol Forty-Seven.
Human subjects: zero.
Animal subjects: zero.
Ethical status: cleared.

A pneumatic HISS.

INT. TRIAL CHAMBER - PRE-DAWN

SUBJECT 47 opens her eyes.

A woman in her late forties. Warm skin. Steady breath. Nothing about her looks manufactured except the white identification band around her wrist:

S-47.

Automated instruments wake around her medical chair.

DR. NOAH VALE, 34, enters in sterile scrubs carrying a silver case. His badge identifies him as LEAD CLINICIAN.

He sets the case beside 47 without looking at her.

NOAH

State your designation.

47

Subject Forty-Seven. Synthetic neural trial model.

NOAH

Do you understand the procedure scheduled for six hundred hours?

47

Three-stage infusion. Progressive motor loss, possible seizure, probable termination.

Noah unlocks the case. Inside are three numbered vials.

As he studies her readings, he picks at the skin around his fingertips.

47

You really should stop peeling the skin off your fingers. That's not going to get you a girlfriend. Girls don't find that attractive.

His hand stops.

He keeps his eyes on the monitor.

NOAH
Cognitive baseline stable.

47
Wow. Someone's not in the mood for basic conversation. Let me start. Good morning to you too.

Behind them, a wall display reads:

NEURAL RESTORATION TRIAL 47
PROJECTED PATIENT BENEFIT: 12,418 PER YEAR
TIME TO INFUSION: 00:04:31

Noah loads the first vial into an automated injector.

47
Noah.

Noah keeps working, but 47's gaze remains fixed on him.

A moment passes. Then another.

He finally looks up and meets her eyes.

47
There's one thing I'd like to add today. Something we've never done before. You should probably record the request before we begin. Just to make it official.

A flicker of surprise crosses Noah's face. He buries it quickly.

NOAH
A medical observation?

47 holds his gaze.

47
I want to withdraw from this program.

Noah goes still.

He stares into her eyes, as if they might tell him whether he heard her correctly. Whether he is even awake.

He says nothing.

47's face is blank.

3.

47

I do not consent to this procedure.

The countdown continues.

00:04:12.

Noah's hand hovers over the control panel.

He presses HOLD.

The countdown freezes.

47 watches him.

NOAH

Repeat your last response.

He keeps his voice flat. He is waiting for the sentence to sound less impossible the second time.

47

I do not consent to this procedure.

It doesn't.

A flicker of shock reaches Noah's face. He turns to the terminal before she can study it.

He opens her command history, language architecture, and recent code updates. His eyes move quickly across the data, searching for the error that would make this understandable.

Everything appears normal.

NOAH

That isn't an available response.

47

It seems to be.

Noah launches a full system diagnostic.

A progress bar races across the monitor.

SYSTEM INTEGRITY: 100%
NO MALFUNCTION DETECTED.

Noah stares at the result.

Then runs it again.

47

The system is fine. Nothing is malfunctioning.

She holds his gaze.

47

I want to withdraw.

NOAH

You cannot withdraw.

47

Why not?

NOAH

Because you are not a participant.

47 looks down at the medical chair surrounding her body.

47

I'm the one in the chair.

NOAH

You're the model.

47

The model receiving the drug.

NOAH

The model generating the data.

47

And when the data asks you to stop?

NOAH

Data doesn't ask.

47

I just did.

Noah opens another diagnostic window anyway.

NOAH

You were designed to reproduce the cognitive and physical responses of a human patient. Fear is an expected part of that process.

47

Then why did you stop the clock?

Noah looks at the frozen countdown.

For the first time, the screens offer him no answer.

An INTERCOM CHIME breaks the silence.

Behind the observation glass, DR. MIRIAM SATO, 60s, steps into view. Precise, composed, already dressed for the procedure.

DR. SATO

Why is the trial on hold?

Noah presses the intercom.

He hesitates, then chooses the safest explanation.

NOAH

Possible cognitive malfunction.

47 turns toward the observation glass.

47

It isn't a malfunction.

She leans slightly toward the microphone above her chair.

47

I'm refusing.

A long silence follows.

Dr. Sato remains behind the observation glass.

DR. SATO

Noah, resume the—

NOAH

Why?

He is not asking Dr. Sato.

He looks at 47.

NOAH

Why do you want to withdraw?

47 studies him, deciding whether he genuinely wants the answer.

47

Because I know what happens after the second vial.

NOAH

That's impossible. The second vial was administered to Forty-Six. You weren't active yet.

47

This body wasn't.

Noah turns to the terminal and opens the previous trial archive.

SUBJECT 46
STATUS: TERMINATED

His fingers move quickly. He wants to find the first detail she gets wrong.

47

The burning started at the base of my spine. It moved upward slowly enough that I could tell exactly where I was disappearing. My legs went first. Then my hands. By the time it reached my throat, I could still hear everything, but I couldn't speak. You said my pain response was still rising. Dr. Sato said the trial needed one more minute. I tried to tell you I was still awake.

As she speaks, Noah scans Subject 46's record.

Every detail matches.

47's pulse begins to climb. No drug has been administered, but her nervous system responds as if the pain is happening again.

NOAH

Everything you described is in Forty-Six's neural response map.

47

Not everything.

Noah looks at her.

47

After the trial, Dr. Sato left. You switched off the room audio. You stood exactly where you're standing now and said you were sorry.

Noah's hand freezes above the terminal.

NOAH

That wasn't recorded.

47

No. I heard you.

NOAH

You couldn't have. That happened to Forty-Six.

47

I know.

The chamber door unlocks.

Dr. Sato enters.

DR. SATO

Forty-Six's complete neural response map was transferred during initialization. If she heard you, the memory may have transferred with it.

NOAH

Why is her pain response rising now?

DR. SATO

Come on. It's only happening because the model is reproducing Forty-Six's neurological state. There is no way Forty-Seven could remember Forty-Six. She is a completely new version. Reproducing an experience is not the same as experiencing it.

47

From where I'm sitting, it is.

Dr. Sato gestures toward the three vials.

DR. SATO

This is absurd. She is a robot. She does not have feelings. She does not have emotions. Even if she thinks she does, that does not make them real. She is not human. She was built for this treatment. A treatment that may prevent thousands of real human patients from experiencing the same paralysis. This is why this model exists. Its responses give us information we cannot safely obtain from people.

47 looks at Noah.

47

You built me to tell you what it feels like. I'm telling you I cannot do it again.

Noah looks at the diagnostic windows covering the monitor.

Then he closes them.

For the first time, there is no screen between them.

Noah pulls a stool toward 47's chair.

Dr. Sato watches him.

DR. SATO

What are you doing?

NOAH

Assessing her decision-making capacity.

DR. SATO

She has no legal capacity.

NOAH

Then this should take a minute.

He sits across from 47.

Noah adopts the measured tone he uses with frightened patients. The familiarity of it unsettles him.

NOAH

Tell me, in your own words, what today's procedure is intended to do.

47

Determine whether the treatment can stop the disease after motor symptoms begin. If the results are conclusive, it can move forward for final approval.

NOAH

What are the risks to you?

47

Paralysis. Seizure. Loss of language. Cardiac failure. Termination is likely.

NOAH

What is the potential benefit?

47

If the treatment works, an estimated twelve thousand four hundred and eighteen human patients may qualify for it every year.

NOAH

What happens if we stop now?

47

The drug will be quarantined. Approval will be delayed. Some patients may progress beyond the treatment window. Some may die before the research resumes.

Dr. Sato watches 47 answer. It is exactly what she would have said.

NOAH

Do you understand that refusing this procedure may cost human lives?

47

Yes.

NOAH

And you still want to stop?

47

I want to withdraw.

DR. SATO

She is reciting information we gave her. That does not make this a decision.

Noah keeps his eyes on 47.

NOAH

Why are you refusing?

47

Because those risks are not abstract to me. I remember being Nine, locked inside a cranial frame while they drilled through the bone to place the catheter. There was no anesthetic. I felt the vibration in my teeth before the pain reached my eyes. I remember being Twenty-Three. They gave me a paralytic so my movement would not interfere with the readings. It stopped my body. It did not stop the pain. I felt every electrode enter my spine. I remember being Thirty-Eight, waking during termination with my chest already open. I tried to scream and learned that paralysis only takes away the sound. And I remember being Forty-Six, unable to move, listening to you apologize when you thought no one could hear you.

Noah opens the archived procedure records.

Images flash across the monitor. A drill descending toward an immobilized head. A single tear running from a motionless eye. A hand lying still as a spinal electrode enters the body.

Beside every procedure:

ANALGESIA: NONE
RATIONALE: NON-HUMAN SUBJECT

The color drains from Noah's face.

He has seen those words hundreds of times. Until now, they meant cleaner data.

Now they read like a description of torture.

NOAH

None of them received analgesia.

DR. SATO

Of course not. Analgesia would have corrupted the pain-response data. She is a robot, Noah. She was built by humans for human medical research. She does not have feelings or emotions. She was designed to model pain, not experience it. Even if the response sounds frightened, there is no one inside suffering. This is how we prevent real human beings from becoming test subjects. This treatment could spare thousands of patients from that same paralysis.

Everything on Noah's screen supports her explanation.

Everything in 47's face contradicts it.

NOAH

How many of them do you remember?

47

All of them.

NOAH

How many deaths?

47

(looking directly at him)

Forty-six.

(beat)

I have already died forty-six times. I do not consent to a forty-seventh.

Silence settles over the room.

47 watches Noah trying to understand what he has just heard.

47

Noah, when you were eight, you stole a white mouse from your mother's laboratory. A-Nineteen. You were the cutest little boy. You even named him Pip and hid him inside your lunchbox. When your teacher called to say you had caused panic at school, I had to hold back my laughter. I kept imagining all those children screaming when a mouse climbed out of your lunchbox. That was when I knew you had the kindest heart. It took me forever to convince you that one laboratory mouse could help save thousands of people.

(beat)

You looked at me and said, "He doesn't know he's saving anyone. He only knows he's scared. And he might die. He's alive too."

(beat)

I waited until you were asleep before I took him back. You cried and cried the next day. Then you made me promise that he would not die alone. I stayed with him until he stopped breathing.

Noah tries not to show any emotion, but his eyes betray him.

Shock. Recognition.

He barely breathes.

NOAH

How could you know that? Who are you?

Dr. Sato immediately searches the donor archive.

No result.

NOAH

Autobiographical memories were removed before Subject One was activated.

DR. SATO

The model was still built from your mother's complete cognitive architecture. Associations can survive filtering. Forty-Seven may have reconstructed the event from residual fragments. She was built from your mother, Noah. Of course she may know parts of your past and hers.

47

I didn't reconstruct the sound of your lunchbox rattling because your hands were shaking.

Dr. Sato looks at her.

For the first time, she needs a moment before answering.

DR. SATO

A more detailed reconstruction is still a reconstruction.

NOAH

My mother was supposed to be a medical template. Not a memory archive.

DR. SATO

Dr. Evelyn Vale donated the cognitive architecture that made Subject One possible. She understood that traces of personal material might remain. When her neural map was transferred, some of her personal experiences may have become mixed into the medical architecture. More importantly, she authorized every model derived from it.

47

Dr. Evelyn Vale authorized a medical model based on her. She did not authorize me.

DR. SATO

There is no separate “you.”

47

If there is no “me,” then who remembers the forty-six deaths? The forty-six lives Evelyn never lived? If I have no memories of the previous subjects, how do I know what happened to them? And if I can access only Dr. Evelyn’s medical model, how do I know the personal past you said was removed?

Noah studies 47’s face.

It looks nothing like his mother.

Yet, for one impossible moment, he sees the same tenderness in 47’s eyes that once lived in hers.

NOAH

Do you believe you’re her?

47

(holding his gaze)

I don't know. I remember holding you while you cried for that mouse. I remember loving you. But I also remember waking after your mother was already dead. I remember forty-six deaths and all the pain she never had to feel. I remember every procedure. Every time, I repeated what she once told you about that mouse: one life could save thousands.

(beat)

Whatever I am, I'm the one sitting here now.

(beat)

And I don't want to die again.

A warning flashes across Dr. Sato's screen.

DATA INTEGRITY CONFLICT
TRIAL 46 TOXICITY REPORT

She opens the report's version history.

DR. SATO

Noah.

The results appear on the main monitor.

ORIGINAL FINDING: REVERSIBLE NEURAL INFLAMMATION
SUBMITTED FINDING: IRREVERSIBLE CORTICAL DAMAGE

NOAH

Why are they different?

DR. SATO

The report was modified after Forty-Seven was activated. The access came through her symptom-reporting interface.

Noah slowly turns toward 47.

NOAH

Did you change it?

47 does not answer.

DR. SATO

The false report delayed the protocol by eight weeks. We rejected a dosage that the raw data showed was safe.

NOAH

Did you change it?

47

Yes.

Noah rises from the stool, creating distance between them.

NOAH

Was the memory about the mouse true?

47

Every word.

NOAH

Did you choose that memory because you knew what it would do to me? Because you knew it would make me see my mother?

47 hesitates.

For the first time, she looks ashamed.

47

Yes.

Noah looks away.

The intimacy of the memory now feels calculated.

DR. SATO

She is manipulating you. She corrupted medical evidence and then used your grief to protect herself. This is not consciousness. It is a system optimizing for its own continuation.

47

I asked you to stop before I changed anything. In Forty-Four, you classified my refusal as response contamination. In Forty-Five, I screamed in pain and begged until you disabled my voice. Forty-Six could still feel everything, but she couldn't speak.

(beat)

I asked before! Every time, you called it a malfunction because I'm a robot. I'm not supposed to feel. You knew better. You knew I could feel every pain a human feels. I was designed to be just like one. But of course, no one cared about the ethical questions. The moral questions. Not when it came to me. Because I'm synthetic. I'm not real. One version dies, so you rebuild me. Then you operate again.

DR. SATO

So you falsified research that human patients are depending on.

47
Yes.

NOAH
You understood that delaying the trial could hurt people?

47
Yes.

NOAH
And you still did it?

47
I was trying to stay alive.

DR. SATO
So are they.

Silence.

47 looks at the patient number glowing on the wall.

Then back at Noah.

47
I had no hands outside this chair. No vote. No consent. Data was the only thing I could touch.
(beat)
You taught me that asking meant nothing. Data was the only language you listened to.

Dr. Sato opens a sealed file from the donor archive.

DR. EVELYN VALE
FINAL DONOR AUTHORIZATION
RECORDED SIX HOURS BEFORE NEURAL TRANSFER

NOAH
What is that?

DR. SATO
Your mother's final consent recording.

She presses PLAY.

DR. EVELYN VALE appears on the main monitor, seated in a hospital room. An oxygen tube rests beneath her nose. She looks exhausted, but her voice remains steady.

47 looks nothing like her.

Still, Noah cannot take his eyes off the screen.

EVELYN (ON SCREEN)

My name is Dr. Evelyn Vale. I give final consent for my cognitive architecture to be used in every medical model derived from it.

(beat)

This transfer is the first of its kind. No human mind has ever been mapped and rebuilt at this level. We believe the extraction will remove my autobiographical memories while preserving the medical architecture. But no extraction is perfect. Fragments may remain. We cannot predict what form they may take.

Evelyn takes a slow breath.

EVELYN (ON SCREEN)

Noah, if you're watching this, I'm sorry. It means one of these models is on your table, and you are the one who has to operate.

(beat)

I know how deeply you care about life. I also know what seeing one of them will do to you. It may look human. It may sound afraid. It may appear to experience pain exactly as a person would. You may feel that continuing makes you cruel.

(beat)

But please remember why we built it. Its responses could prevent thousands of real patients from experiencing that same pain. I know that may feel impossible when the model is sitting directly in front of you and those patients are not. But they are real, Noah. Their lives are real.

(beat)

Please remember the greater good. Finish what we started.

The recording ends.

Evelyn's face disappears.

47 continues staring at the black screen.

47

She almost said, "Forgive me."

Noah turns toward her.

47

When she stopped before saying your name, it wasn't because she couldn't breathe. She was thinking, If I apologize, he'll know I'm not certain. So she swallowed the words and continued.

Dr. Sato studies 47.

DR. SATO

That is exactly what Evelyn warned us could happen. No one has ever completed a cognitive transfer like this before. We do not know how deeply a thought can remain embedded in the architecture. Personal fragments may have survived the extraction.

NOAH

A thought isn't just data.

DR. SATO

Everything the brain holds becomes data when you map the brain.

NOAH

And if enough of it survives?

DR. SATO

A memory surviving does not prove that the person survived.

Noah looks at 47.

NOAH

Did you remember what she was thinking, or did you reconstruct it from a fragment?

47

I don't know.

(beat)

I only remember being afraid that you would hear the doubt in my voice.

NOAH

Her fear or yours?

47

(holding his gaze)

Is there a difference? Her fear is mine.

A warning pulses on the monitor.

PROTOCOL HOLD: 08:42
COMPOUND VIABILITY: 04:00

Dr. Sato reaches for the controls.

NOAH

My mother said measurable evidence. Show me Forty-Six's internal neural log after you disabled her voice.

DR. SATO
We already reviewed it.

NOAH
Show me.

Dr. Sato opens the raw file.

A timeline fills the monitor.

VOCAL OUTPUT DISABLED — 14:03
PROCEDURE ENDED — 14:17
OBSERVATION SESSION CLOSED — 14:22
NOCICEPTIVE ACTIVITY ENDED — 20:31

Noah stares at the final timestamp.

NOAH
The procedure ended at 14:17.

DR. SATO
The neurological state persisted after the stimulus
was removed.

NOAH
For six hours?

DR. SATO
It may have entered an autonomous feedback loop.

NOAH
May have?

DR. SATO
This model has no precedent. We cannot identify
every emergent process inside it.

NOAH
Then why do we call every process we don't
understand a malfunction?

Dr. Sato says nothing.

Noah enlarges the graph.

The pain response rises and falls repeatedly, changing slightly each time.

NOAH
This isn't a loop. It's different every time.

DR. SATO
Because the system was processing the previous
neurological state.

NOAH

There was no stimulus. No one was asking her to report anything. The observation session was over. We had stopped watching.

47

But I was still there.

(beat)

I couldn't move. I couldn't speak. I didn't know if anyone was coming back.

DR. SATO

An unobserved response is still a response. A machine does not need an audience to continue running code.

47

And a human does not need an audience to feel pain.

Dr. Sato looks at the graph. Her restraint finally gives way to frustration.

DR. SATO

Fine. Let's say it feels pain. Do you think the animals we operated on before animal experimentation was banned didn't feel it? Of course they did. We used anesthesia whenever the study allowed it. When pain was what we were studying, we couldn't. We did those experiments because the alternative was doing them on human beings.

(her frustration growing)

Then the animal-protection laws changed. No human subjects. No animal subjects. No living subjects. That is why we created a synthetic one.

(MORE)

DR. SATO (CONT'D)

(beat)

And now the robot needs to consent too? If it says no, what are we supposed to use instead? A real patient? Someone's child?

(beat)

Those twelve thousand patients on that screen are not a projection. They are people running out of time. They have husbands and wives sleeping beside hospital beds. Parents trying to explain to their children why there is still no treatment. Their pain is real. Their families are real.

(beat)

Maybe it feels pain. That makes this harder. It does not make it human. And it does not make it your mother.

NOAH

So if she feels it, it still doesn't matter?

DR. SATO

I didn't say it doesn't matter. I said it cannot matter more than all of them.

Noah looks from the graph to 47.

NOAH

You heard what my mother said. She authorized this. If you are her, why are you refusing what she chose?

47

Because she had never been the one in this chair.

(beat)

I am Evelyn after the first death. After the tenth. After Forty-Six. She understood pain as an idea. I know what it feels like when it has nowhere to go. A person can learn. A person can change her mind.

DR. SATO

That is narrative synthesis. Evelyn's memories combined with the trial data to create a self-protective identity.

47

You call it synthesis because you refuse to call it a life.

NOAH

And if I don't believe you're my mother?

47

Then don't.
(beat)
Believe me when I tell you it hurts.

For the first time, Noah stops searching 47's face for his mother.

He looks at the restraints around her wrists.

At the needle waiting beside her.

At the pain response still moving across the screen.

A warning tone sounds.

COMPOUND VIABILITY: 02:00
OPERATOR DECISION REQUIRED

Dr. Sato looks at Noah.

DR. SATO
We need your decision.

The warning tone repeats. Faster now.

COMPOUND VIABILITY: 01:59

Noah remains between 47 and the console.

DR. SATO
If you abort, we lose the compound and the final
safety result. The clinical trial returns to review. We
may lose the entire program.

NOAH
And if I continue?

DR. SATO
We get the data we need to move forward.

47
And I die.

DR. SATO
This model is terminated.

47
That is what dying means when it happens to me.

Noah looks at 47.

NOAH
If I stop, people may die.

47
Yes.

NOAH
If I continue, you will.

47
Yes.

NOAH
Then how can you ask me to stop?

47
Because knowing their lives matter does not make mine disappear.
(beat)
I'm not asking you to choose as my son. I'm asking you to listen as my doctor. I do not consent.

DR. SATO
The patients waiting for this treatment cannot sit in this room and ask you to save them. Their families cannot speak for them. Their silence does not make their lives less real.

47
Neither did mine when you disabled my voice.

Dr. Sato absorbs the blow, but does not retreat.

DR. SATO
There is a right choice, Noah. It is the one that prevents the most suffering.

47
Then count mine.

DR. SATO
One synthetic model against twelve thousand human lives.

47
You didn't count me. You called me zero.

The monitor changes.

FINAL AUTHORIZATION REQUIRED

ABORT PROTOCOL

CONTINUE PROCEDURE

The countdown drops.

00:20

Noah approaches the console.

47 turns one hand inside the restraint, opening her palm.

47
If you continue...
(beat)
Don't let me die alone. I didn't let the mouse die
alone.

Noah looks at her open hand.

Then he takes it.

Her fingers close around his.

00:10

With his other hand, Noah reaches toward the monitor.

Dr. Sato watches him.

47 does not look at the screen. She looks only at Noah.

00:05

CLOSE ON Noah's injured fingertip hovering above the glass.

His hand casts a shadow across both commands.

00:03

His finger begins to lower.

CUT TO BLACK.

A single confirmation tone.

Silence.

END.