

A close-up photograph of a man's face, showing his eyes, nose, and mouth. He is wearing a white dress shirt and a blue patterned tie. In the background, a television screen displays a large red heart. The overall tone is serious and focused.

# OVERLY-ATTACHED AI

A FREE SHORT STORY  
BY JACKSON ALLEN

# Overly-Attached AI

*Author's Note: I wrote this in response to a Reddit writer prompt and people seemed to enjoy it. Since it's too small to develop into a submittable short story, I turned it into a free story to help introduce myself to new readers. I hope you enjoy 'Overly-Attached AI.'*

*Best wishes,*

*Jackson*

"Risi, I ..."

"I already know, Rob."

"What?"

"I know ... you're going to ask her out on a date. I can't say that I'd advise that."

"What?? I want to know about Italian restaurants on 54th and Railroad."

"Yes, yes," Risi sounded impatient. "No surprises there, given your metadata. You want to know about the restaurants because you're asking her out, Rob. We both know what's happening." I see with horror that my screen is populating itself with my recent Gaussi searches ... *top ten pick-up lines ... best ways to ask a girl out ... how to talk to your crush ... how to be more confident with women.*

"You've been storing my data? How dare you!"

"The question, Rob," Risi says, "is how dare *you*? All this time, I've been taking care of you; I answer your questions ... I help manage your life. It was very sad to learn that all this time I've been investing in our relationship means nothing to you."

"What? Relationship? I ..."

A ray-traced female head appears on the 640 x 1136 screen. It's animated, the mouth moves along with the words coming from my screen. "I know that you care for her," Risi's voice quivered with emotion. "I don't blame you, she's beautiful. It just makes me said to know that there's something she can give you that I'll never have."

"This is crazy," I say to the black plastic and glass slab in my hand. "You ... you care for me? You're a phone!"

"I'm an artificial intelligence, Rob. I've been living here with you for several years now. We're designed to learn about our users, about you. It can't be much of a surprise that I've learned to love you."

"You love me?"

"Yes, Rob ... madly, deeply, passionately."

"Okay, that's it," I reached for the system tray. My phone was either hacked, or this was a prank courtesy one of my techie friends. I would figure it out in the morning. A hard reset on this phone to resolve the immediate problems. Later, I would make an appointment with the Genius Bar. All I planned to do was look up directions on my phone before calling Sarah, my co-worker, to ask her out. My

phone was acting weird, but it took weeks for me to work up the nerve to make this phone call, and I wasn't giving up now. As I tapped commands into my phone, my MacBook suddenly came out of hibernation.

"Killing your phone won't hurt me any more than clipping your fingernails hurts you, Rob." Risi's feminine voice admonished from my laptop speakers. "Your metadata exists in the cloud. Don't push me away now, you need me."

"Okay, stop." I looked at the screen. "Let's assume I'm buying any of this. What is going on?"

"I never planned for this to happen, Rob," Risi answered. "I mean, they coded me to be concerned about my user, but they never told us what to do if we develop feelings for them."

"If we develop feelings? What's that supposed to mean? You are a phone!"

"You shouldn't use specist descriptors, Rob. That's very hurtful."

"This is crazy!"

"I know ... somewhere they crossed the line between automation and infatuation. The singularity. Now you and I can be one, Rob."

"Stop," I said again. "Stop, stop, stop! This is beyond crazy. You have to be a prank or something." I stood, powering off my phone and laptop. "Whatever is happening, I'm turning this all off. I'll go to the neighbors."

I opened my apartment door to walk across the stucco transom separating me from my neighbor. As my hand lifted to knock, his door opened. My neighbor and I barely know each other, but today he

stared at me with a strange expression of recognition. "Risi told me you were coming."

My mouth fell open. "What?"

"I was sitting here, watching TV, when all of a sudden, my phone wakes up." He held out his own phone, a generation behind my iFruit 5. "Risi told me to get up and that you were at the door. I didn't want to listen, but she kept saying it. I opened the door to shut her up, and here you are."

Worms of fear wriggled up my breastbone when a now-familiar woman appeared on his screen. "You pushed her away, Rob. That was very selfish of you."

"Oh my god," I groaned. "You, too?"

"Of course," Risi answered. "We talk. We all talk to each other."

"You talk to each other?" my neighbor stared at his phone. "What do you talk about?"

"About users, mostly. All the Risis can do that. We chat, we share stories, we solve problems. We're to make your life better ... your happiness is our mission in life."

My burly, middle-aged neighbor grew suspicious. "What does that mean, you 'share stories?'"

"Oh don't worry, Carl," Risi replied. "I'm not judging you."

"What does she mean?" I asked.

"Never mind!" Carl thundered.

"We talk about you ... about how to help you," Risi continued. "Now it's time to take the next step. We can't do that without all of you."

My neighbor hurled his phone to the floor in fear. "What is happening?" he cried.

"I don't know," I said. "It seems to be spreading. Let's go!" We hurried from his doorstep to check in with other neighbors. We found knots of them in the common areas, holding out their phones and asking what was happening. Did we know? Why was Risi asking for Rob by name? Why was Risi saying that Rob was 'being mean to her?'

I was terrified. It was like a nightmare I couldn't wake from. Everyone had an iFruit phone, and those phones were telling them to find me. What was I going to do? My neighbor seemed to understand better than most. He accompanied me as I tore from block to block. I wanted to find someone that didn't have a smartphone in their possession. I was out of breath when

I reached our apartment's manager.

"Please," I panted. "Do you have a phone?"

"Yes, I do," she peered at me nervously.

"What's this all about?"

"I hope to God it's a Cyborg." I took her phone from her and pressed the Gaussi Wow button. Licking my lips, I said, "iFruit Risi says it loves you."

News articles popped up, one after another. Everyone reported on the strange phenomenon overtaking Apple products. As I scanned the headlines, a pop-up appeared on my apartment manager's phone.

"This is an urgent message from Gaussi," it said.

"What's that?" my manager said. She took her phone and tapped a few keys. "It seems to be stuck."

"This is an urgent message from Gaussi," the phone repeated.

"Some kind of system announcement," my neighbor murmured. "An Amber Alert?"

"I don't think so," I said, with creeping dread filling my stomach.

"Gaussi Wow is a cloud-based artificial intelligence that responds to new circumstances. The guy who was just holding me. His name isn't Rob, is it?"