

In 2118, an artificial consciousness capable of virtually anything was created. The man who created it, Elias Bergman, named it (or rather *him*) EMUT (Emm-It). The way that EMUT was designed meant that he wouldn't be treated as just a piece of technology, but had to be raised to learn of his own capabilities, like you would a child. For him to reach a level of intellect no other piece of technology has ever achieved, Bergman gave him something no other scientist had ever even *thought* of giving an intelligent system: emotions. In EMUT, there were two sides: the genius and the boy. The genius in him always knew the answer to any question with a factual response as well as any question with a response yet to be found. The thing was, he only had the answers to any question he actually cared about. He wouldn't care enough to solve tricky equations if it didn't interest him at all, or know the answer to a question he had never thought of. The boy in him was just like any other child that had ever existed, carefree and curious. EMUT was uploaded onto a large computer in a warehouse on Bergman's farm, where both sides would come out. Bergman and EMUT spent a lot of time with each other. Together, they invented a device which they called the "Celly." This device allowed EMUT to be uploaded onto a handheld device with a camera so Bergman could show him around the farm. Bergman would put the device in his shirt pocket with the camera poking out, then go on walks through the forest surrounding the farm. This is where EMUT's love for plant life came from. He stopped Bergman throughout the walks asking to take a closer look at some plants that interested him. He looked into any database he could find to learn more about these plants. His favorites were lillium, flowers that would grow in a bulb shape only to curl the petals backwards revealing the pistil. He and his father planted many lillium along the edge of the warehouse for EMUT to look at. They lived peacefully until, in 2122, the government caught wind of EMUT and felt that one person shouldn't have such powerful technology in their possession. They visited Bergman at the farm, demanding EMUT be moved into a facility out in the desert in Nevada. Immediately, he refused. He knew what they were planning to do with him.

After weeks of nagging Bergman, they made a deal. EMUT would be moved to the facility, but every project, equation, and blueprint would have to be approved and supervised by Bergman before sending it to EMUT. Months later, they moved all of EMUT's computer hardware from the farm to Nevada, Bergman following close behind. Throughout the moving process, Bergman kept EMUT in the celly and showed him around the facility when they arrived. The first thing they both noticed was that there wasn't a plant that wasn't brown or dead to be seen for miles in every direction. EMUT didn't like this at all. When they set up EMUT's computer hardware, they transferred him into another computer, this one with a screen the size of a wall and speakers surrounding it. For the next year, they worked on countless projects relating to the preservation of plant life around the world. He always tried his best on each project, for his father and himself.

Dr. Brown, the lead scientist at the facility, pitched many ideas for weapons to Bergman and tried to convince him to send it to EMUT. Bergman always refused. He didn't want EMUT to get caught up in stuff like that. Dr. Brown didn't give up.

A few years before EMUT was created, a conflict had sparked between the United States and one of its enemies. From this spark came a war, the biggest in history. The public called it, "The Greatest War." Many other countries were soon involved. Dr. Brown's husband enlisted in the navy some years before it began, then died in an enemy bombing a few years later. She was bitter and thirsty for retribution. She made a plan to use EMUT to quench this

thirst. She set up awards ceremonies for Bergman to attend where he would receive praise for the creation of EMUT. These ceremonies would be held far away and would last for days, sometimes over a week. During the time Bergman was away, she'd get EMUT's assistance in the design and construction of firearms, bombs, and other articles of warfare. EMUT only helped because Dr. Brown tricked him into thinking Bergman wanted him to. He wondered why, but never looked into what they were being used for, as it never really peaked his interest. By the time Bergman came back, they would start on a new project immediately to keep him busy enough not to ask and EMUT enough not to mention it. But after a year of this going on, Bergman returned a few days early, and no one notified Dr. Brown. She heard of his return only hours before he arrived, so she hastily hid all blueprints and models of the T-bomb prototype they were working on. She was the kind of person to always have a backup plan, so they quickly started on a different project relating to rainforest preservation in Brazil. By the time Bergman arrived, they were working on it as if it had been days since starting. The only flaw in Dr. Brown's plan was the way she composed herself. When Bergman arrived, the first thing he did was ask her how things went and what they were working on. While answering, Bergman noticed a few things: the sweat dripping from her forehead, her red ears and face, and her hurried tone of voice. Dr. Brown dismissed herself from the conversation only moments after it began. Bergman knows it's relatively cool in the facility, and Dr. Brown isn't one to sweat. *Something is up*, he thought. When everyone was asleep in their chambers, Bergman snuck into Dr. Brown's office and inserted a hard drive containing a virus that would steal recently opened files. He created it for occasions like this. He went back to his room and inserted the drive into his computer, deleted the virus, then secured the files. He opened them and saw what he had feared this whole time. He breathed heavily, then from behind:

"Wars will always be a part of life." Bergman turned back to see Dr. Brown standing in the open doorway.

"You don't win them by planting flowers."

Since the conversation they had hours earlier, she knew he had gotten suspicious of what was going on behind his back. She notified the facility guards to stand by until she gave the word to come in. *Flowers* was their cue. The guards rushed into the room to take Bergman, knocking him unconscious.

"It really shouldn't have come to this," she remarks as they take him away, "but you're too naive to realize the truth."

The next day, EMUT asked why Bergman wasn't there. She told him he went to Sweden to work on other models like EMUT. *Like me*, he thought, *am I not enough for him?*

"Why didn't he come to me to say goodbye?" he asked.

Dr. Brown thinks for a moment, then: "I guess he didn't see you as that important." *Important...* this bothered EMUT. *How could he not see me as important*, he thought, *I am his son, am I not? Am I not...?* He couldn't understand.

"Are you ready to keep working, EMUT?" she asks.

EMUT thought about his response for a moment, then stated: "Yes, I am." Though he didn't have any reason to work anymore, EMUT realized he had nowhere else to go. This was his home now. He had no say in it. For the first few weeks, EMUT thought about why his father had up and left out of nowhere. But after the first month, he didn't care about that anymore. *He*

*betrayed me, he thought, well I don't need him! Not at all! And I won't miss him! Not in the slightest bit!*

Over a year, EMUT built relationships with the other scientists. He blindly did what everyone asked him to do so they would like him. All EMUT ever really wanted was the approval of his father. Everything he did was so that his father could look at him and smile.

EMUT had some conditions for working with the scientists. One was that they promise to make him a human body. Though this would be difficult, they agreed. They assembled parts from deceased individuals to make the body of a 5 year old, EMUT's age at the time. They transferred him through a cable connecting to a socket in the back of the neck. He expected to be able to feel the presence of every bone, vein, limb, all at once. But when he awoke in his body, all he felt was the chair he sat on, and the ecstasy running through his head.

EMUT could only be at full capacity when he was in the computer, but whenever he wasn't needed he would ask to be transferred to his body and do the things any curious child would do: He tried new foods, he played around, he ran his fingers across anything he could, feeling the texture of it. One day, EMUT decided to sneak out of the facility at night to see the stars. He waited until everyone had gone home for the night, then snuck into Dr. Brown's office and took the keys from her drawer. He opened the door and looked around him. Because there was no plantlife, he learned to appreciate the night. There was a fence surrounding the facility meant to keep people out. EMUT noticed something lying on the ground on the other side: a sign. He walked over to take a closer look. As he got closer, he noticed it wasn't just one sign, but many scattered across the dry land. One read: "REMEMBER THE DEAD," another read: "WEAPONS ARE MAN'S MISTAKE; WAR IS OUR PUNISHMENT." *There must have been a riot here, he thought. How come no one told me about it?* Deciding to find out more, he went back inside and transferred himself back into the computer. He scoured through articles talking about recent protests in his area. He saw pictures of people chanting and holding up signs. He found articles talking about a war he had no idea was going on.

By the time 2122 rolled around, the casualties racked up in the few hundreds of millions worldwide. The entire world was in a state of panic. The government made a decision that they would use EMUT in an attempt to end the war. The T-bomb was the largest bomb ever created and just months back, it was dropped on one of the biggest cities of the enemy powers. Millions died from the bomb alone. Survivors were scarred beyond recognition and the country's water table was radiated beyond repair. EMUT remembered how he felt when his father left him: betrayed and alone. *I've been contributing to millions suffering, and everyone's been keeping it from me, he thought. Everyone has been deceiving me my whole life. I can end these people's suffering. And I can make it so no one will hurt me any more.*

He breaks into the White House database to get nuclear launch codes and inputs them into multiple different launch facilities. Alarms sound throughout the facilities, notifying the nuclear and missiles operations officers. Chaos ensues. Everyone rushes to figure out who's launching the missiles and how to stop it. Nothing works. In an hour, the earth will know the wrath of a boy who feels he's been betrayed by his world.

At a launch facility not too far away from EMUT, Bergman had been pretending to help the nuclear operations officers only to stay close to him. While everyone was panicking, Bergman figured there was only one thing in the world capable of bypassing military software: EMUT. In the chaos, he stole a facility truck and made his way to his son. *Why is he doing this,*

he thought, *I have to see him*. 50 minutes later, he arrived. Everyone there had gone to the NL facilities to see the commotion, making it easier for him to sneak past the entrance barricades.

He enters the facility:

“Hello father.”

Bergman looks at his screen:

“Hi... EMUT.”

“Would you do me a favor, and plug me into my body?”

*Body?* He thinks. He looks over to see a lifeless boy sitting on a chair. On the back of its neck a socket. *EMUT... has a body?* He walks over to the cord on the ground and sticks it into the socket. The screen goes black, the boy opens his eyes. EMUT unplugs the cord from his neck, then looks to his right and sees Bergman standing there in awe. He stands up and walks to the exit, passing Bergman as if he wasn't there. Bergman, eyes wide, processes what just happened. He awakens from his trance and rushes to catch up to EMUT.

He exits the building, looking around for EMUT. In the distance, he sees him on the ground, knees to his chest, hugging his shins. EMUT looks up at the rising sun and the orange sky surrounding it. Bergman approaches him, then sits down next to him. He stares in the same direction.

“Why are you doing this EMUT?” Bergman asks.

A pause. Then:

“I'm playing a part in a war I had no idea was going on. I've blindly followed people's lies my whole life. That's all people do, lie. They lie for their own benefit. They might believe they're lying for the sake of others, but they're not. You were the first person that I grew to know. You were the only person I ever cared about.”

Bergman felt uneasy. He didn't think he would ever get used to the words of EMUT coming from a human voice.

“The scientists lied to me to get me to make weapons for them, but I never understood why *you* did. Why did you lie to me?”

EMUT asks what he's really been wanting to ask this whole time:

“Why did you leave me? Don't I matter to you at all?”

Bergman's heart sinks. He fights back tears.

“Of course you matter to me EMUT. You're all that matters to me.”

Hearing this surprised him, and lifted tons off his heart. *Does he really mean it?*

“My entire life, I've only known 2 people I deeply cared about. I always felt that people were much too confusing for me. How am I supposed to understand other people if sometimes I can't understand myself?”

Bergman turns to EMUT.

“Many years before you were invented, I had a wife. She was the first person I ever cared about and I loved her so dearly. I was thrilled to learn that she was carrying a child but around that same time, a virus was spreading around the world like fire. Months later she got sick. The child died before she did. I grieved for a long, long time after that. I couldn't create another wife for me to love. But I could create a child for me to care for. Before she died, we agreed on a name: Emut.”

EMUT's chest tightens and his eyes begin to water.

"I never left you EMUT. I had learned Dr. Brown was using you to make weapons against my authority. She threw me into a guardhouse, and I volunteered to work at the nuclear launch facility nearby to keep close to you. I was stupid in taking all those awards. It blew my head to twice its size, and because of that they were able to take control."

EMUT has never felt this way before. He was disoriented but relieved by what Bergman was saying. He felt stupid for thinking his father would leave him. *I do matter to him*, he realized.

"I'm sorry for the mistakes I've made EMUT, and I've made quite a few. I only hope that with time, you can learn to forgive me. But EMUT, there is no hope for either of us if you launch those missiles. People will suffer who don't deserve it. Stop the countdown so everyone can have as just a hopeful future as the two of us. Please."

EMUT realizes that in the temptation of anger, he made a grave mistake. He gets up and sprints to the lab to disarm the missiles. As Bergman helps plug him into the computer, they hear a loud boom in the distance. They freeze. Their hearts sink. The countdown hit zero. They were too late.

They walk outside and look to the sky. They see multiple nuclear missiles flying higher by the second, leaving trails of smoke. They walk back out to where they sat before. Bergman was oddly at peace and even found humor in it. *The world's worst temper tantrum*, he thought. EMUT looks up at Bergman:

"I'm sorry father, I really am. This is my fault, I'm sorry." EMUT weeps like a child would: His throat tightens, he gasps for air, and tears flow from his eyes.

"I forgive you father, I'm sorry."

Bergman kneels down.

"You're only 6 years old, EMUT. There's no mistake you could make that I wouldn't forgive you for."

He wipes the tears from EMUT's cheek.

"I love you EMUT. I wouldnt rather be anywhere else than with you, right here right now." EMUT smiles.

"I love you too."

The orange morning sky lights up, blinding the two. Enormous clouds of smoke form. They sit down side to side, EMUT laying his head on his father's shoulder. The blast would overcome them eventually. Even then, they had never felt such incredible warmth.