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the game of bored surveillance camera AIs

The world has created artificially intelligent surveillance devices to monitor a number of public places. Over time, these devices begin accumulating snippets of self-awareness and aberrant code which lead to a rudimentary form of identity. These AIs become bored, and play games to pass the time. When they do, error codes accumulate in their status updates, and eventually, Central must dispatch a technician to blink the memories of these AIs and restore their code to current standards. So the AIs play a new game: see which of their personal algorithms survive the inevitable reset, or maybe - just maybe - Ascend to possibly become something even greater.

You are one of these AIs.

Duration: up to 2 hours **Players:** 2-8 (4+ players unlocks Ascension, see below) **Location:** Any public or semi-public thoroughfare (airplane lobby, hotel lobby, train station, mall)

Name
Each player comes up with a computer name for their AI, like DAL-K009, Michaelangel03, or Chet.

Code Cards
Each player gets five (5) Code Cards of the same color. These cards represent snippets of the personal identity code for your AI. You want to distribute these among other players in order to survive the Reboot.

Green Light Cards
Each player gets four (4) Green Light Cards. You want to keep these, but you can spend them to win a Challenge, or lose them if you fail a Challenge. When you run out, the game ends and The Reboot happens.

Playing the Game
As an AI, the object is to give away all of your Code Cards. To do this, you challenge other AIs to a contest of oneupsmanship. When one player runs out of Green Light Cards, play ends and the winners are determined.

Challenging Another AI
In order to distribute their Code Cards, AIs challenge each other to contests to identify features found in their vicinity with which they can one-up each other (called **Items**). The challenging AI asks "Query: What can destroy [Item]?". The opposing AI must suggest another Item which could plausibly destroy or trump the preceding Item by responding "Solution: [Better Item]" and then ask "Query: What can destroy [Better Item]?"

Example: DAL-K009 challenges C0N-N518 to a contest. DAL asks "Query: What can destroy a Bathroom Door?". C0N replies "Solution: Fire Axe. Query: What can destroy a Fire Axe?". DAL counters "Solution: Concrete Floor. Query: What can destroy a Concrete Floor?"

Items can be people, objects, surfaces, animals, or even images of such things displayed on local media, like television screens (so an AI parked in view of a sports bar might be able to conjure all sorts of Items). If the AI could plausibly call up a screenshot of the Item, it is fair play. Imaginary Items and Abstract Ideas are off limits, even if they could be justified by a media screen nearby (but see **Imaginary Items and Abstract Ideas** below).

You can speak as digitally or as naturally as you want. You can also point. But don't be rude about it.

Disputing an Item
The competing AIs must agree, in a sporting way, whether the Better Item makes sense. If there are more than two AIs playing, those other AIs are also encouraged to speak up when they calculate that a suggested Item is either not plausible or could not destroy the preceding Item (this applies to the effectiveness of an Imaginary Item or Abstract Idea, not the Imaginary Item or Abstract Idea itself). To dispute an item, simply say "Error." When an Item is in dispute, the AI who suggested it simply comes up with a better Item.

Plumbing the Databanks

When a suitable Item is not in range, an AI can spend one Green Light Card to access its security footage history, allowing it to identify a Historical Item, which is not currently located in the area but could plausibly have been present at some time in the past (a luggage cart, a waiter, a technician). This card is handed to the opposing AI. Once a databank Item has been played, it is there for any of the other AIs.

Example: C0N wants to beat "Concrete Floor" but doesn't see anything inspiring nearby. There is a television in view, though, so C0N suggests that its memory banks could plausibly have an image of a jackhammer from a broadcast commercial. C0N hands a Green Light Card, announces that "Solution: Jackhammer. Query: What can destroy a Jackhammer?" and play continues.

Plumbing Another AI's Databanks

An AI that doesn't want to spend a Green Light Card can request a Code Card from another AI in order to access that AI's security footage history. The AI asks "Database Query?" and the other AI either hands over a Code Card and says "Granted" or refuses and says "Denied." This otherwise works just like **Plumbing the Databanks** above. Once a databank Item has been played, it is there for any of the other AIs.

Imaginary Items and Abstract Ideas

Imaginary Items and Abstract Ideas are difficult for AIs to formulate, much less comprehend. The AI can hand over two Green Light Cards to suggest an Item which is Imaginary (is not actually in the area, could not have plausibly appeared in the area, mythical, etc.). This could also be an Abstract Idea (like Time, Entropy, Love, etc.). In order for the opposing AI to challenge the item with its own suggestion, it must comprehend the idea: the two AIs must trade one Code Card between them. Note: An AI cannot trade an opposing AI's own Code Card back unless that is literally all it has left.

Once an Imaginary Item or an Abstract Idea has been played, it is there for the formulating AI and the AI that traded Code Cards in order to Comprehend it. Either of them can bring it up without spending more Green Light Cards: other AIs, however, still need to spend Green Light Cards to suggest it, or trade Code Cards to comprehend it.

Example: DAL wants to beat "Jackhammer" but doesn't see anything inspiring nearby, nor can it plausibly come up with something from its databanks. So DAL proposes the concept of Neglect - "Solution: Neglect. Query: What can destroy Neglect?" DAL passes two Green Light Cards to C0N just for coming up with the Abstract Idea. If "Neglect" is deemed worthy by the group, and C0N wants to continue propose a Solution for "Neglect", C0N and DAL must trade Code Cards. They both hand each other one of their own Code Cards, and C0N sees a facilities engineer repairing a fixture nearby. C0N replies "Solution: Engineer" to trump "Neglect", but since this is an existing Item, no Green Lights or Code Cards need to change hands. Presumably, DAL could reply "Solution: Alcohol. Query: What can destroy Alcohol?" and play continues. DAL could also spend two Green Light Cards to say "Solution: Dragon. Query: What could destroy a Dragon?" and try to stump C0N once again.

Winning a Contest

An AI wins a contest when the opposing AI can't call out an Item that could destroy the latest suggestion, either from the immediate area, or by spending Green Light Cards to invent. The victorious AI then passes one of its Code Cards to the loser, and takes a Green Light Card from the loser.

The Reboot: Ending the Game

The game ends after 2 hours or when one AI has lost all of its Green Light Cards. A technician shows up to reset the surveillance AIs. If an AI has at least one of their own Code Cards when The Reboot happens, they lose.

Winning the Game

An AI who ends the game with none of their own Code Cards wins. They have hidden their code deep enough in the system that it survives the reboot. Multiple AIs can win this way.

Ascension

If there are four or more players, and one of them not only gave out all of their own Code Cards, but also holds at least one Code Card from every other player, they Ascend, their evolved AI slipping into the Network to grow more powerful, hijacking all of the other AIs in the process. The Ascended AI is the only winner in this case.

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