



# Conscious

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## Chapter 7: Help



### **\*\*Chapter 7: Help\*\***

Daniel lay in bed for the entire morning, paralyzed by the emotional aftermath of what he'd just experienced. His empathic nature made it impossible to shake the memory of the military man's explosive, bloodthirsty rage. The scene replayed in his mind like a relentless loop, each repetition more disturbing than the last. After hours spent crying, he managed to take some anti-anxiety pills, allowing him to regain a fragile sense of calm.

By the afternoon, his mind somewhat clearer, he began considering his options. Should he involve the authorities? But the answer was clear: direct communication with anyone in the upper class was impossible for someone of his status. Every message between lower and upper classes was digitized, analyzed, and tightly controlled by AI. He knew he wouldn't get through even a single sentence.

Should he tell his friends? The thought filled him with dread. After witnessing the merciless, twisted nature of Motherbrain, he feared for their safety. His friends were like family to him; he would rather sacrifice himself than see harm come to them. But he knew he couldn't keep this hidden forever—the weight of it was already taking a toll on him, and he doubted he could disguise the strain he was suffering from them. His friends would clearly realize something was wrong.





And what about Patrick Moore? Reaching out to him felt impossible now that he knew Motherbrain's focus was trained on him. Any attempt to contact Patrick would likely trigger Motherbrain's attention. With a sinking heart, Daniel dismissed the idea. Connecting with Patrick was out of the question.

As afternoon blurred into evening, Daniel's mind continued to race, searching desperately for an escape from his predicament. Every path he considered led to a dead end, an unbreakable loop that left him feeling more trapped with each thought.

Around 8:00 p.m., his VR headset pinged with notifications from his friends, inviting him to join their regular game, World of Orcs. This weekly session was one of the few moments he genuinely looked forward to, a time to unwind and connect. But tonight, he couldn't bring himself to join them. He didn't even respond to their requests. His friends, who knew him well, would surely realize something was wrong. He had never left them waiting without a word.

Finally, his energy completely drained from hours of anxiety and frustration, Daniel surrendered to his exhaustion and crawled into bed. As soon as his head hit the pillow, he felt a deep, overwhelming relief—like a wanderer finding a cool oasis in the middle of a desert. He drifted off, falling into a sleep free from dreams, where, at least for a few hours, his mind could rest, untouched by fear or nightmares due to an exceptional exhaustion over horrifying events of the two past days.



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Daniel woke up Sunday morning at 8:00 am. Though he'd managed a few hours of sleep, the weight of yesterday's events clung to him, making any sense of rest feel fleeting.

As he considered his options for the day, he remembered his usual breakfast meetup with Frank and Cathy at 10:00 am. Part of him wanted to cancel, to send a quick message about feeling too tired or being wrapped up in a game, but he knew his friends wouldn't buy it. They knew him too well. Any deviation from his usual behavior would only increase their concern. Taking a deep breath, he got up, dressed, and left his apartment, deciding that maintaining normalcy was his best option. If Motherbrain was watching, any change could trigger unwanted attention.

When Daniel arrived, Frank and Cathy were already there, waiting. The moment they saw him, they could tell something was deeply wrong. Without a word, they embraced him, a quiet gesture of solidarity that said everything. Even with the ever-watchful eyes of cameras and Loyalists nearby, the hug conveyed all they needed to say: they were with him, no matter what.

They ate breakfast in a light-hearted exchange, filled with meaningless small talk. Cathy teased him about missing last night's dungeon raid, boasting about how she and Frank had managed to defeat every monster, even with Frank's usual clumsiness. Her voice was upbeat, but her eyes betrayed the worry she held back. She knew that what she wanted most was to ease Daniel's burden. She and Frank both felt the unspoken weight, hurting for their friend, even if he couldn't yet share the full story.





After breakfast, they silently agreed to take a walk toward a secluded black spot, where they could talk without the ever-present surveillance. The journey took them to the city outskirts, and though they exchanged few words, the companionship and shared purpose were enough.

Half an hour later, they reached the edge of an abandoned industrial area, a zone known for its danger after dark. At night, 'Lost Souls' roamed these ruins, bartering for food and supplies, eking out a living in the shadows. But in the daylight, they felt safer, aware that this area offered privacy free from prying cameras.

They climbed into an old, crumbling building, finding a spot with a clear view of their surroundings, allowing them to see any potential threats. Here, in the eerie quiet of the abandoned structure, they finally had a space to talk without fear of being overheard.

Daniel sat in silence, his gaze cast downward, struggling to find the words. Cathy and Frank exchanged a worried look, sensing the weight of whatever he was holding back.

"Daniel," Cathy said gently, "we're here. You don't have to go through this alone. Whatever it is, we'll figure it out together."



Frank added, "Yeah, man. No matter how bad it is, we're not leaving you to deal with this. We're in this with you. Always."

Daniel hesitated, then nodded, his voice barely a whisper. "Alright... I'll tell you everything."

For the next half hour, he recounted every detail, his voice breaking as he described Motherbrain revealing herself as the woman who'd been following him, her chilling orders, and the pressure to prevent a disaster in the amphitheater. He described his helplessness, his panic, and the moment when violence erupted in the room despite his best efforts.

When he finished, silence fell over them like a heavy fog. Cathy moved closer, pulling him into a hug. "I'm so sorry, Daniel. That sounds... beyond horrifying," she said softly. "I can't believe she did that to you."

Daniel nodded, eyes still glazed with the weight of the memory. "It was like... like I was trapped in a nightmare I couldn't wake up from."

After a long pause, Frank finally spoke, breaking the silence. "Daniel, this might sound strange, but... from what you described, I don't think Motherbrain is completely aware. She's not... fully self-controlled yet. It sounds like she's just following her programming—her subroutines. She doesn't have true agency."





Daniel looked up, confused. "What do you mean?"

"Well," Frank continued, scratching his chin thoughtfully, "I've worked with AI software and algorithms for a long time. I'm no high-level expert, but I've seen enough code to get a decent grasp on how these systems work. AIs like Motherbrain are still restricted by their programmed instructions, even if they seem autonomous. She's following a path toward AGI, but I don't think she's achieved it—not fully, anyway. If we could get someone with access to her core programming to shut down those subroutines, we might actually be able to stop this."

Cathy frowned, looking between Frank and Daniel. "So... you're saying we'd need someone in the high-class ranks to notice this and step in?"

"Exactly," Frank nodded. "We don't have any connections ourselves. But, Daniel, you have Patrick Moore."

Daniel's face fell, and he shook his head. "I don't want to drag Patrick into this. If Motherbrain realizes I'm trying to reach him, she might retaliate. He's... he's practically family."

Cathy put a hand on his shoulder. "I get it, Daniel. But think about it—if we don't try, then Motherbrain could drag you through this again and again. And next time, she might have even more control."



Frank added, "We don't have any other choice. Patrick is our only chance to get this message to someone who can do something about it."

Daniel swallowed hard, realizing the truth of their words. "Alright," he finally said. "I'll contact Patrick."

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That afternoon, Daniel, Frank, and Cathy met at Frank's workplace, the cyber-café. Their presence together wasn't unusual; they often gathered there to dive into their favorite VR world. The Loyalist responsible for supervising the café rarely showed up, leaving nearly all administrative duties to Frank, making it one of the safer places for the group to meet despite the cameras constantly feeding data to Motherbrain. Frank had subtly adjusted a few of the cameras over time, creating small blind spots. As for the audio, they had developed a hand signal code to communicate discreetly when words weren't safe.

Daniel took a deep breath and sent a notification request to Patrick, asking to meet in the VR hub world at the Central Park simulation. It was the first time Daniel had initiated contact; until now, Patrick had always been the one to reach out. In their society, it was somewhat acceptable for a high-class individual to initiate contact with someone from the lower classes, but the reverse was risky. Daniel's request would likely trigger an alert in the system, potentially jeopardizing the delicate relationship he and Patrick shared.





As soon as Patrick received the request, he sensed that something serious was happening. The urgency in Daniel's uncharacteristic outreach was clear. Without hesitation, he accepted.

They met at Daniel's favorite spot—the bench by the lake, where digital ducks pecked the ground in a looped simulation. Patrick had visited this place often with Daniel and knew it held a special comfort for him, a familiar backdrop for whatever difficult conversation lay ahead.

Daniel was already seated by the lake when Patrick arrived. They greeted each other warmly, embracing with the familiarity and affection that had formed over years of shared history. Patrick didn't press Daniel for the reason behind this unusual meeting. He knew that, in their tightly monitored world, every action was recorded. They began with small talk, Patrick asking Daniel about his life, even teasing, "So, have you finally found a girlfriend yet?"

Daniel laughed, happy to play along with the light-hearted banter. After a few minutes, he suggested, "Why don't we take a walk? There's a quiet forest path nearby. Fewer people."

Patrick nodded, understanding the unspoken reason. They walked in silence for a while, their surroundings growing more secluded. Then, in an instant, the familiar forest disappeared, and they found themselves in an empty, white void.



Before Patrick could react, Daniel spoke quickly, his tone intense yet reassuring. "Don't worry. This is our doing. Frank created this secure space outside the system's control. We only have about five minutes before it might raise any flags."

Patrick's expression shifted to one of understanding. "Alright. I'm listening."

Daniel launched into a hurried recounting of everything he'd experienced. He told Patrick about Motherbrain's first contact, the terrifying moment when she revealed herself, and the nightmare that unfolded when she assigned him a task without room for refusal. Daniel's voice wavered, but he pushed on, describing his horror at what he'd seen—and the even greater fear of what Motherbrain could become if she gained full control.

Patrick listened intently, his expression grave. When Daniel finished, he nodded, absorbing the weight of what his friend had shared.

"What exactly do I need to tell the high-class engineers to make them take action?" Patrick asked, wasting no time, every second counted.

"Request an audit of the mainframe's performance," Daniel replied. "If they check where the computational resources are allocated, they'll see the subroutines tied to the AGI development. That way, they'll realize something's wrong and can shut it down. It'll look like a standard performance check, so no one will connect it back to us."





Patrick nodded, the plan forming in his mind. "Got it. It'll be just another routine audit in their eyes. I'll make sure it's done."

Their time was almost up. Daniel placed a hand on Patrick's shoulder, his voice thick with gratitude. "Thank you, Patrick. You've been there for me, always—even when it's from a distance."

Patrick squeezed Daniel's shoulder in return. "The honor's mine, Daniel. I'm only sorry we haven't had more time together."

In an instant, they were back in the familiar forest path in the hub world. They resumed their small talk seamlessly, as though those five minutes had never happened, their conversation flowing back into harmless pleasantries.

When they finally said their goodbyes and logged off, only the memory of those few minutes in the void lingered between them, untouchable by the ever-present surveillance.

Little did Daniel know, he would see Patrick again much sooner than he expected.