

Situation 666

By: Michael Zhang

“WARNING! WARNING! Situation 666 has occurred! Please prepare for drastic measures immediately!” blared the speakers obstreperously, its noise echoing through the building.

I jolted up in alarm, my eyes sagging like overburdened sacks. “Impossible,” I muttered drowsily, “A Situation 666 hasn’t happened in a century.”

With enervation streaming through my veins, I stumbled out of bed and approached the weapons closet. Scanning my fingerprint on the keypad, I swung the door open and retrieved my advanced forces armor and electrically boosted weapons. After slipping on my gear and readying my electric pistol by my side I hurried out my room into the nearest corridor. A fire had abruptly sprouted from the control room on the opposite side of the hallway. A female researcher backed out of the door, cramming her body on the edge of the railing; a startled look formed on her face as she trembled, making eye contact with a robotic figure that emerged from the depths of the fire.

“Please, please, please,” she wept as the robot soldier approached her.

Seeing that it was too difficult of a shot, I sprinted across the hall, a shark serrated knife grasped firmly in my hand.

“Please have mercy on me!” the woman begged through muffled sobs. The robot was three feet away.

I continued to charge like an aggravated bull. The air was streaming across my body like a strong wind as I accelerated.

Clank! The robot stepped forward, now two feet away.

A short distance was all that was between me and the AI creation as I gave a sharp cry, preparing to raise my knife.

Ignoring me, the robot approached the woman, now a single foot away.

I took my last few strides and raised my knife as the robot unleashed a blade from his metallic hand. With a deafening battle cry, I propelled my blade forward, glowing with electricity, into the small back of the robot. A spark arched from its back like a rainbow and the robot spasmed tempestuously before crashing into the ground with the sound of metal bending. The dagger impaled him at least three inches into his bimetallic hard drive and took away any life that the robot may have had. I received a wide-eyed blank stare from the female researcher as she stood motionless, uttering one word repeatedly, “Latinum...”

A couple of doctors soon arrived to help the researcher. She was placed on a stretcher and carried away for further medical help, still muttering that one word non-stop while she stared blankly in front of her. I gave them a wave goodbye and headed out of NAIRI Headquarters (National Artificial Intelligence Research Institution), my old home.

Bolting down the stairs, I took every shortcut possible: leaping over furniture, jumping the last few steps, even hopping down an entire story. I scampered across the building like a frantic mouse chased by a starved, greedy cat, awaiting its meal. As I leaped to the last floor, my legs spinning like a racecar’s wheels at maximum speed, I skidded to a stop as I stood gazing at the dismaying sight in front of me. Several dozen armed security robots had positioned themselves at the entrance, restricting any passage. Their eyes gleamed like rubies as they stood in a phalanx position, their metal bodies and weapons gleaming like perfectly polished mirrors lying on the sunniest day of the year. They didn’t seem to approach them but they didn’t want to let them pass either.

“Razor, glad to see you,” General Douglas stood to my left with the rest of my squadron, a grim smile on his face as he stood aiming his rifle at the phalanx of robots. “You’re one of the fastest on our squadron. I want you to plant these land mines in front of their feet when I throw the smoke bomb.”

“Ready to serve,” I replied, nodding in agreement.

Carrying the explosives, I prepared myself and my concentration. General Douglas readied his smoke bomb and held up three fingers to start the count. The other soldiers in my squadron were at the ready, preparing their weapons to attack. I stood in a ready position, prepared to explode in a burst of speed as the general continued to lower his fingers. A pinch of nervousness and stress managed to find its way into my mind as the count lowered to one.

“NOW!” hollered General Douglas as he chucked the smoke bomb into the large group of robots, raising their shields.

I kicked off of the ground vigorously and slid towards the floor in front of the dazed robots raising a single mine, ready to place it when a sudden explosion knocked me off course into one of the robots’ impenetrable shields. Moaning in agony, I rolled away from the robot phalanx and looked up to see explosives planted in the ceiling above the area in front of them; they detonated into scorching fires and sent fragments of stone and metal loose that pelted me and my squadron from above like a massive hail storm. In the corner of my eye, I managed to spot a familiar face poking out of the window: Chancellor Andrew; he carried a bundle of explosives in his arms and look down on my squadron, my heavily injured squadron. My vision swam and I felt myself lose control of my body as a curtain of darkness overcame me....

* * *

“All vitals intact, manageable cuts to the arms and upper body, and oh, he’s awake,” a pair of doctors stood over me, examining my injuries. “Hello, Razor. You have recovered decently and are better than we expected; your squadron is also doing fine. We rescued you after the incident and brought you here, to Camp 666, a camp made specifically to flee to in a Situation 666. When you are ready General Douglas wants to see you.”

As I peered around the hospital room that I was in, questions and memories flooded my mind like a swarm of bees flying around their nest. Shaking off the discomfort, I was surprisingly wowed by my condition after the pain I endured in the NAIRI Headquarters.

“Uh-um-ok,” was all that I managed to get out.

After assembling my stuff and putting on my gear I scurried over to the cafeteria where General Douglas and my squadron were having lunch.

“The robots have taken the building and are planning another attack,” General Douglas explained giving me a wave as I settled in for a coffee. “Our drones have confirmed the next location at Fort Donovan, five miles from here. It holds hundreds of robots working as defensemen for the fort. We will have to flank them at the AI storage compartment, where the majority of robots are dormant and reserved for the future. Razor will go with David, Charles and Jacob to flank the East side. I’ll go with Kian, Matt, and Dan to flank the South side. See you guys tomorrow for the mission”

Later on in the day, I was informed that I was out for a *whole week*. I was still settling in and getting used to the camp; I was definitely not ready for another mission. Why were the robots so rushed to conquer the world anyway? Situations 666s were rather rare and unexpected. The world was still working on a way to manage robots used in everyday life more safe and efficient after centuries of research.

Heading to my dormitory, a familiar voice entered my ears, “Razor can I have a word?”

I turned around to spot Tessa, a researcher I got to know back at NAIRI Headquarters.

“What’s up,” I replied turning my attention to her.

“There has only been four Situation 666s in AI history, but this one is quite curious,”

Tessa began as she led me to her private office. “The last three were caused by ambushes on robot transfers or attacks on buildings that caused slight faults to robots and their compartments. Those choices have been made nearly impossible by reconstruction and design, but this case is different. Our unhackable recordings of the building have shown that no one had entered the building or came near at all. We also haven’t sent any robots transports for multiple decades and no employees have left the building directly. The entire institution has been researching and finding possible causes. Our most possible hypothesis is that somebody had modified the robots’ coding and somehow activated them soon after.”

My mind was a machine as it churned; I thought profoundly, rubbing my chin like a soft kitten. After almost a minute a switch clicked in my mind.

“It was probably Chancellor Andrew! I saw him planting the mines in the ceiling before I blacked out! I think he programmed a way to communicate with the robots!” I announced, filled with glee and pride.

“If what you say is right it just might be him. I would never have thought...,” Tessa nodded thoughtfully. “But we need to confirm, got any ideas?”

“Well, he’s probably going to meet the robots at Fort Donovan. What do you think?”

“I don’t know Razor; we’ll just have to see.”

A scuttling was heard on the opposite side of the door and I swung it open hastily. My eyes shot from side to side like security cameras, searching for the culprit. I caught a glance of

the fleeing intruder leap behind a group of indoor flowerbeds. Scurrying towards the flowerbeds a voice emerged from behind me.

“Razor what are you doing,” turning around I noticed General Douglas standing with a skeptical look on his face.

“Oh nothing,” I lied, heading to my dormitory with a last glance behind the flowerbeds.

I soon arrived at my room and sprung into my bed, my body sinking through the memory foam mattress like a pebble through viscous molasses. *I'll get him tomorrow*, I thought before a wave of inky darkness took my consciousness away into a deep sleep....

BEEP BEEP! My alarm screeched like a frightened cat after being sprayed with water. The sound shattered my eardrums as I sat up, stretching. I set my alarm an hour early last night for the coming day, without thinking twice about the consequences. Knowing it was a mistake, I flopped a lazy hand down on the alarm, ending the ear-piercing sound. Quickly, I slipped out of my pajamas and gathered my gear, setting off to the cafeteria for breakfast. The thought of Chancellor Andrew still lingered in my mind as I hurried down the crowded hallway. He was often stern and didn't seem to like many people. There seemed to be a permanent scowl on his face and was accused of causing the last Situation 666 before he was confirmed innocent. But it was still surprising that he would betray the human race so tragically.

Jogging down the corridor, my eyes fell upon a woman laid across a hospital bed pushed by a pair of doctors that I'd met before. Instant recognition came upon my mind as I approached the doctors. It was the researcher I saved during the Situation 666 that had occurred. She was lying in the hospital bed with heavy eyelids, slowly dropping every second. Her hair was scattered messily over a pillow and she lost most of her dazed look.

“How is she?” I asked, my eyes focused on her.

“Oh, she’s ok. But she’s still muttering that one wor-.”

“-Latinum?” I cut her off impolitely, “Sorry.”

As if she was never interrupted, she continued to speak, “Yeah, and it seems like she’s trying to warn the NAIRI about something. Quite odd, really. Whatever happened in the control room she was in really gave her a fright.”

“Well I got to get going, a mission to attend,” I stated as I continued to the cafeteria.

General Douglas was awaiting me at the cafeteria with my squadron, they huddled around the table they sat at and glanced at me before continuing their breakfast. Helping myself to some bacon, eggs, and hash browns, I took an empty seat and settled in to eat. We finished our meals in peace before General Douglas broke the silence.

“We have to set out in an hour so act fast. Remember the objectives: Go with your group of four and we’ll flank them at the AI storage compartment. Razor’s group will take the east route, and mine will take the south,” my squadron paid great attention as our general reviewed the mission, pointing at a map. “We’ll meet together and destroy the robots with explosives.”

“Sir-uh-never mind,” I stuttered, deciding not to explain what he thought about Chancellor Anderson; I couldn’t anticipate his reaction and didn’t know what he would think.

General Douglas raised an eyebrow at me before heading to the barracks for final preparation. My squadron and I soon followed after gathering our gear and we grouped up in one of the barracks. Everything was sorted out quickly and my squadron was ready for one of our most important missions of all time. The booming sound of helicopter blades fluttered towards us, informing us our ride had come. I took a last glance at Camp 666, my temporary home, before turning my attention to the helicopter that stood outside.

“It’s time soldiers,” General Douglas motioned to the chopper, the pilot sat waiting patiently as we gazed over at it. The beating of the helicopter blades created an artificial wind that was felt as we neared it. A polished steel airfoil design resembled a futuristic look and its magnificent design was seen to every detail as we started to board.

“Not a bad helicopter they got here,” Charles pointed out the obvious as the others smirked at him, boarding the chopper one by one.

“Sit back for a smooth ride,” insured the pilot as the helicopter lifted off the ground.

I sat back and relaxed in the leather seats enjoying the view. We drifted smoothly over hills and valleys, as the pilot had promised. The stress that had previously made itself home in my mind was soon drowned out by relaxation and confidence. My squadron seemed to feel the same; they sank into their comfortable seats and closed their eyes to embrace the relaxing moment which would be soon replaced by an overwhelming mission. Moments later the helicopter lowered itself onto the rough terrain around the outside of Fort Donovan.

“Have a good time!” yelled the pilot sarcastically with a chuckle and flew off into the distance.

Scowling, my squadron started for the vast fort, looming above the trees. We were obviously unsatisfied to leave that zone of comfort but hurried on anyway.

“You know the plan,” General Douglas motioned forward and we split into two groups, heading our own directions.

I trotted swiftly across the rough terrain, my group following me. We sprinted at top speed, hurrying towards the east side of the fort like a stampede of buffalo off a cliff. The air blew against me like an invisible hand as we hopped over obstacles and rushed towards the east entrance. Fort Donovan was now right in front of us, its massive walls towering over us like a

mountain. A row of soldiers were lined up on the top of the wall, guarding attentively. An officer soon opened the gate, exposing the large military camp that stood inside. I motioned forward and scampered stealthily with my half of the squadron. Everything was fine for the first couple minutes of our trip until a soldier bellowed a cry from behind us.

“Don’t stop! We have our own part to deal with!” I commanded ushering my group forward as adrenaline circulated through my veins aggressively

My group gave a couple of worried looks around before nodding and hurrying on after me. Chemical explosions burst the walls beside us as mechanical sounds of the robots echoed through the fort mixed with the ear-piercing screams of soldiers and workers. My heart pounded like a caged lion against my aching ribcage as I hurried forward. *Only 10 meters to go*, thought as I hollered words of encouragement behind me. An avalanche of rubble buried a couple of squad mates behind me. Our fate rested in our own hands as we pushed forward. Sweat rained down from my forehead like a waterfall as I concentrated on my last sprint. I breathed heavily as I staggered ahead, my body aching in pain as if I was on fire. My vision swam as I watch those around me fall. A familiar figure approached me hastily: Chancellor Andrew. The man that had started this insanity ruined our lives; he was the one that let the robots free. As I stood motionless waiting for him to finish us off, I saw the face that appeared on his face, pity, sadness, and then immediate anger.

“Come on Razor, I need you,” his sudden words caught me by surprise as he injected morphine into me, sending strength through my veins.

I stood up, staggering as I shot him a quizzical look.

“We have no time,” he explained impatiently. “I know what you think Razor. It wasn’t me who placed the explosives back at NAIRI Headquarters. I was taking them away, trying to

save you all. Wandering the second floor, I noticed them immediately. I don't know who it was, but he must've been really been intelligent to program the robots without anyone knowing."

I limped after him to the AI storage compartment, our meeting place; I struggled to interpret what I heard as I was dragged behind him. Turning the corner, I stopped dead and stood petrified at the sight in front of me. Shock was all I knew for a couple seconds before I shook out of a temporary coma. What stood in front of me was someone I always knew. He was always looked upon as a strong, intelligent general. But all I knew was a lie, the man that stood in front of me was General Douglas. Not just General Douglas, but the rest of my squadron, dead. They lay motionless and wounded scattered around the ground, no life in their blank eyes.

"W-w-why," I stuttered, experiencing more shock than I would ever want to.

"I have my reasons Razor. The NAIRI won't give me the control I need so I decided to take it myself." hissed General Douglas with a scowl on his face.

"Leave the human race alone Douglas! I've already called backup and they're on their way!" exclaimed Chancellor Andrew, exasperated.

"ENOUGH! TIME FOR YOUR END!" General Douglas bellowed loudly as robots broke free from the storage units next to us.

I scowled agitatedly and swallowed hard as Chancellor Andrew and I started to move backward into the corner. The robots advanced slowly, their bold red eyes full of hatred. Chancellor Andrew glanced at me for help; I shook my head depressingly as we continued to cram into the tight corner. No explosives on hand, no blades, and all weapons lost. I felt the blood streaming vigorously through my veins as stress accumulated in my body, my rapid breathing not slowing for anything. General Douglas laughed horrendously as he watched the robot army approach us, now only five feet away.

“Letting me guard the control room was a mistake. Just a single command word was all I needed to program and release my AI army,” he explained still laughing hysterically like a demon.

What General Douglas said seemed to clear a path, a path to what I needed. A thought started to form in my head, but I just couldn't wrap my mind around it. The robots were in arms reach now; Chancellor Andrew and I were sandwiched together in the corner, frightened looks on our faces. I searched for a memory desperately, but nothing seemed to come up. There had to be something that I could remember, all I needed was a single word.

“This is our end Razor,” Chancellor Andrew whimpered as his face went pale.

Thoughts swarmed my mind like items caught in a tornado. My time was vanishing as fast as it had come. All I could do was think, and thinking was what I did. It was like I relived the past couple of days, the memories came to me at light speed as they played themselves in order, my head ached in pain as thinking became all I knew. I fluttered open my eyes to see a blade sprouted out of a robot's hand, aimed at my chest. But it was too late for them, I had what I needed. I let go of the breath that I was unaware I was holding.

“Latinum,” I muttered in triumph.

The entire army of robots tumbled like dominoes in an unexpectedly satisfying way. It was as if a video game was about to end but somebody pulled the off switch, like a tidal wave had a mind of its own and headed back into the sea. The life was immediately sucked out of all the robots and they laid motionless on the ground. Chancellor Andrew and I stepped over the metallic bodies that littered the ground and approached General Douglas with a victorious smirk. He stared at us with immense shock before scowling grimly and backing up in obvious defeat.

“Backup has arrived Douglas. There is nowhere to hide,” spat Chancellor Andrew as a large group of Special Forces soldiers entered the room.

The soldiers poured into the room like a spill of water and circled General Douglas cautiously. They were dressed full black armour and gear and held weapons that I wasn't even familiar with. General Douglas just stared blankly at the ground in defeat, not even a bit of resistance as he was escorted out with a ring of soldiers around him. My hands were positioned on my hip as I watched the traitor exit the door, a glum look on his face.

“I'll never suspect you again Chancellor Andrew,” I promised as the Chancellor gave me another victorious smile and a thumbs up.