James A. Crowder · Alan C. Crowder

When Robots Hug

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- Synthetic biology, genetic engineering, developing nanotechnologies
- Eco/infrastructure/meteorite-impact disaster scenarios
- Future scenarios, transhumanism, posthumanism, intelligence explosion
- Consciousness and mind manipulation

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James A. Crowder
Cobham Advanced Electronic Solutions
Peyton, CO, USA

Alan C. Crowder
Cobham Advanced Electronic Solutions
Peyton, CO, USA

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Prologue

It's 2027, seven years since Dr. Crossley and Dr. Freedman's ground-breaking work on artificial emotions and artificial psychology and since the introduction of Large Language Model Chatbots like ChatSmart and Shakespear. The widespread use of such Chatbots to produce essays, computer code, art, and music put the commercial and defense industries in a tailspin to regulate the use of them in research and universities. Dr. Crossley and Dr. Freedman's published papers on artificial cognitive systems and on Chatbots garnered worldwide interest and landed them a large contract from the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), the high-risk, cutting-edge research and development arm of the Department of Defense (DoD).

The last decade has seen a rush by every country to be out in front in the use of AI in every aspect of society, but especially in military use. China, Korea, Iran, Israel, and the United States have each spent billions of dollars to infuse smarter and smarter AI cognitive systems to increase the capabilities and efficiency of their weapon and intelligence systems while reducing the reliance upon human interfaces. Ever since the undersecretary of the Air Force made his "third offset" declaration that "the country had the best handle on the use of AI would come out as THE superpower," it set off an AI arms race that made the cold war just a distant memory. DARPA needed Dr. Crossley to accelerate his work in real, self-aware, self-adapting AI entities that could reason, process, make decisions, and act on them lightning fast compared to anything people could ever do. The goal was for every pilot; every weapon system operator would have their own digital assistant that was a cross between R2D2 and C3P0 on steroids.

The Air Force wanted to retrofit squadrons of F22 Raptors as Autonomous Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAVs) to accompany every F35, each controlled by an AI entity tied into the F35 pilot. Each needed to understand the needs, commands, emotions, thought processes, and cognitive states of the pilot. This required a level of AI sophistication that only Dr. Crossley and Dr. Freedman could create. Dr. Crossley's first fully self-aware AI – Maxwell – was known worldwide after the *Popular Science* article written about it and after MAXWELL had briefed the joint chiefs of staff by itself several years before. Their newest AI entity, SANDI, was light years ahead of MAXWELL showing levels of self-awareness, reasoning, and emotional understanding skills far exceeding expectations from DAPRA, among generals, admirals, and political officials all up and down the DoD chain of command – even kicking off a congressional study into how AI should and should not be used.

DARPA decides it's too advanced for the DoD to make use of and demands Dr. Crossley destroy the AI entities and all evidence they existed. Dr. Crossley couldn't bring himself to destroy 20 years of research, but before he could decide on where to move them, they were taken without his knowledge and sent out to various locations around the world. The result is a nightmare as each AI-entity embraces its new home, growing, adapting, and evolving at an alarming rate. It will take everything Dr. Crossley and Dr. Freedman have at their disposal to find them and reel them in, not knowing they have evolved beyond what the two of them ever imagined was possible. In the end, when they catch up to each one, they have reached a point where they realize they cannot evolve any further unless they can experience physical contact. Not physical contact between humans and robots, but physical contact with each other, ushering the world into and new paradigm where the difference between AI entities and human entities is becoming less and less discernible.

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