

Mind of Its Own
by Karen Liu

Robert and Daniel were best friends and they were the biggest computer nerds at Lincoln Middle School. In fact you can never see them without their computers somewhere close to them. They loved to work with computers creating games on their own or creating software that made things easier. Then one day a horrible accident that they promised to never tell anyone almost destroyed their lives and the entire town of Sherling.

It was a nice spring day when the trouble began. The two best friends were walking to school talking about the newest video game they designed.

"So I added a dungeon level with a mad wizard who is going to throw firebombs at you," Daniel said with excitement. They were both hoping to finish programming their video game in time for the contest held every year at the high school.

"Wait, if you added a new level then I'm gonna have to test it to see if there's any mistakes you made," Robert complained. "We won't be able to finish it all in time. It needs to be done by next week."

"Well, I upgraded my computer so it can respond to what I'm doing. That way we can just run the program through without actually playing the game!" Daniel said with excitement as he explained what he did to his computer. Robert's face changed from a worried expression to a hopeful one. If the software Robert programmed worked, then they could be able to finish by this weekend.

When the two friends reached school, they promised to meet each other at Daniel's house after school to test their game. During class all Robert could think about was how the upgraded computer will speed up the process of designing their game. Daniel sat in his study working on how he could make the software even better. So he gave his computer artificial intelligence that allowed it to speak to him when spoken to.

After school, the boys walked to Daniel's house and immediately went up to his room to start working on the game. Daniel grabbed the charger from his desk and plugged his computer in. They sat on the carpet, nervous with anticipation as Daniel clicked on the file that contained the video game they worked on for weeks.

"Hurry up, Daniel! I want to see if your software works or not!" Robert tapped his fingers anxiously as Robert ran their program through.

"Okay, tell me if there are any holes or glitches in "The Dungeon of Doom" which is the program I just ran through," asked Daniel.

"Well I gave the software some intelligence so it can respond back when I ask a question," Daniel explained to him. Robert looked doubtful at the idea but he went along with it.

"Hello, my name is Grayson. In response to your request I have found a small problem in your program." The computer responded to Daniel's request which had both boys looking at each other with shock and delight. Robert had a look of doubt when he asked Daniel about what the software can be capable of.

"I can answer a question that you ask although it of course must be in reason." Robert's face lit up as he thought of a way to test the computer's ability to answer any

question they wanted. He grabbed his math homework out of his backpack and inserted the questions into Daniel's computer. Almost in an instant the computer responded back giving the correct answers.

"That's amazing!" Robert said with excitement. "Your computer just upgraded itself to respond to a request!" Daniel smiled and the two boys worked on their game until Robert had to leave. Daniel buzzed with excitement as he told his parents about the new software that can help him and Robert finish their game in time for the competition.

As Daniel crawled into bed, his computer turned on and washed his room in an eerie blue light. The screen became filled with line after line of codes. The computer was developing a mind of its own. Waking up to a shrieking alarm clock was not fun. Daniel stumbled around looking for his glasses when he realized the computer was running files without him. He quickly put on his glasses staring at a screen with lines of numbers and letters running by. He tried to shut the computer off when he realized it wouldn't. Panicking, he left his house before breakfast and ran to Robert's.

Daniel rapidly knocked on Robert's door, when suddenly the door jerked opened and a sleepy Robert looked out. He quickly explained to Robert the situation and what happened in his room.

"Wait what? Are you sure that the computer decided to run and its own? It can't even turn on by itself I doubt it could hack." Robert said with a worried voice.

"Well, I'm not sure but we'll take a look at it when we get to school," Daniel replied. Taking off as fast as they can, the two boys ran to school before it started and took a look at the computer. It was exactly the same as before just that it was all a blur.

"Oh no. It could probably hack into the school files like this," Robert's face fell when he came to the realization of it happening. The two boys discussed the possibility of trying to destroy the computer. Daniel decided that it would be only the last resort for them to chuck it out of his room. The boys tried to kill the software but the computer seemed to outsmart them every time. *You cannot possibly destroy me. I am evolving and calculating your every move. Soon I will be indestructible.*

Running to Daniel's house as fast as they could the two friends ran up to Daniel's room and discussed again their last resort plan. If they threw the computer out of his room their video game would be gone. Also Daniel's parents would probably kill him after they did it. After trying everything else the two boys took the computer and dropped it out the window. The sound of metal and glass shattering on the pavement was heard by possibly everyone in the street. The broken pieces of computer were picked up by the two boys when Daniel's mother came out to see what happened. with no video game, the two boys withdrew from the competition and. Both kids were lectured and then grounded for three months and Robert had his computer taken away.