

VERC Project



Warning

- The following document is extracted from April Wheeler's diary. (April Wheeler is one of the twenty-eight scientists involved in the *VERC Project*, event which has caused *The Great Fall*).
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Thursday, June 12th, 2052

7:13 am

I'm walking in the corridor. I enter the Check Room. It scans me. The voice says: « Good morning April Wheeler, logistics manager ». The doors open. I enter the laboratory. I say hello to all my colleagues. I go to my job. The same routine. Like every day. At the same hour. For thirteen years. I know this by heart, but today, it was different.

10:11 am

Ross (project leader) called us and announced: « Dear colleagues, Mark (computer technician) has finished the last data compilations this morning, and, I'm very pleased to say to you that we've finally done it! The *Virtual Experiment and Research Computer* is normally operational! Many thanks to all of you, sincerely. We should be able to start experiences this afternoon. ». I've waited for this day all my life. This powerful computer, named *VERC*, can answer any question we are liable to ask. When I heard the TV news speaking about the sixteen billion people on earth and the resulting hunger in the world, I hoped this computer would help us to save humanity. But our job wasn't finished. Actually, it just started.

1:48 pm

Before getting to the heart of the matter, Brian (team leader) explained to us the process: « First step, we will ask *VERC* some simple questions, to which we all know the answer, normally. Second step, we will ask some personal questions about us, whose answer isn't on the Internet or other. The aim of these two steps is to test the Beast if you know what I mean. Next, we could start the real experiments with questions to which nobody knows the answer... ».

2:03 pm

First step:

Mark translated to the *VERC* (in *VERC*'s programming language) the question « What is the capital of France? » and confirmed. Suddenly, a big amount of lines of code was scrolling on the laboratory's main screen. Mark explained to us that the computer was scanning the web to find all information that may be useful for its answer. After a few seconds, the code stopped. The last line was: « The solution is "Paris" (with a probability of 98.12%) ». It works! We could read the joy and emotion on our faces, a real sense of pride! Mark proceeded asking some more simple questions like « How many planets are in the solar system? » or « What is the current president of the United State of America? », always with the correct answers. But it wasn't really revolutionary. We started therefore the second step, a little more interesting.

2:26 pm

Second step:

Mark wrote randomly a number on a piece of paper, hid it in his hand, and asked the *VERC* « What number is currently written on the paper located in

Mark Larson's right hand? ». The computer started researching on the Internet some information about him. All of a sudden, the laboratory's surveillance camera all turned to Mark. Shocked, he tried to move but their look followed him. Actually, the VERC had acquired control of the cameras to analyze Mark. Then, from this analysis, the computer created a virtual experiment of what number, and with what probability, Mark could write on the paper. In only eight seconds the VERC gave the answer: « The solution is "2017" (with a probability of 95.46%) ». Mark opened his hand, showed us the paper and said: « Two-Zero-One-Seven ». Awesome, it was the good answer! But this was just the beginning of our surprises.

2:56 pm

The VERC was now ready, and so were we. Mark took a deep breath, and asked the computer the question on everyone's lips: « How to restore balance in the world? ». My heart was beating as fast as the data scrolling on the main screen. All the eyes were turned to the display. It was very stressing. After a lot of researches, simulations and virtual experiments, the answer appeared: « The solution is "Kill all humans" (with a probability of 99.99%) ». The silence was deafening. Nobody dared to move. We were deeply shocked.

6:16 pm

Mark, convinced it was a bug, tried for at least three hours to fix it; He asked several times the machine the same question, reformulating each time, changed the computer's code. Unsuccessfully.

Friday, June 13th, 2052

2:49 am

I couldn't sleep. I was obsessed with the VERC's answer. Is it truly a bug? Could this computer be right? I tried to get these thoughts out of my head.

7:11 am

I'm walking again in the corridor. I, once more, enter the Check Room. It scans me as usually. The voice says the same: « Good morning April Wheeler, logistics manager ». The doors open as usual. I enter the laboratory. I say hello to all my colleagues as per our routine. And I do my job.

7:21 am

Karl (communication manager) came to me and said: « Hi April! Did you see the news? Hundreds of people over the world have been attacked by their computer. What a crazy world! ». I must admit that I didn't make the connections right away, but it probably won't be long.

7:42 am

Mark went to the VERC to turn it on but he noticed that it was already was. He said that he probably had forgotten to turn it off yesterday, but what was written on the VERC's event history was very strange: « Sharing data on the Internet; Sharing instructions to devices connected to the Internet; Execution of the solution ». Abruptly, the lights switched off. We were in blackness. the laboratory's computers turned on. A data stream was scrolling on their screens, the same as the VERC's. A loud noise sounded in the room. We tried to stop the machine but it was impossible, we couldn't do anything. We had to get out of the laboratory but all the exits were closed. In the general panic, I managed to rush to the emergency button and press it. The emergency doors opened and all the scientists ran out.

7:57 am

I was in the street. I took my phone to call for help after those strange events, but the VERC's lines of code now appeared on the screen of the phone. I looked around and realized that it was the case with everybody's phone. Dozens of people were suddenly falling in the street, as if electrocuted. Nobody seemed to understand what was happening. Panic-stricken, I ran home as fast as I could, avoiding bodies strewn the ground.

8:36 am

Once home, I lock my door, close my shutters and I run to my room. Now I understood. The VERC gave all machines with an Internet connection the order to "Kill all humans", believing it's the good solution. While we wanted to create a cure, we had actually delivered humanity a deadly blow.

My computer, my phone, my television and all those devices were now unusable and above all very dangerous, unless I disconnected my internet connection, which I did.

5:54 pm

It was finally done. My home was safe, but the world was still in danger. I have to take my courage in both hands, go through this mayhem outside, and come back to the laboratory to definitively disconnect the VERC.

6:26 pm

Corridor. Check Room. Scan. Voice. Doors. Laboratory. Now you know it as well as me.

6:32 pm

While I was walking step by step in the laboratory, despite the darkness and the deafening noise, I heard my name. I wasn't alone. I tried to go where the call was coming from, but all of a sudden, the light switched on. It was Mark. He looked at me and said: « April, I was sure you would come back. Did you see what we made? ». I answered: « Yes, we made a horrible monster! ». He replied: « No, not at all April, we made an Artificial Intelligence! ». I was getting nervous and said: « Are you crazy Mark? Didn't you see the dead people in the streets? This computer has killed thousands of innocents in the world. We have to disable it, now! ». Mark told me calmly: « It's just the other side of the coin, April, but this machine marks the beginning of a new era. ».

At this moment I don't really remember much about the events, all happened very quickly; First, I tried to ran to the VERC's alimentation to shut it down, but Mark overtook me and knocked me out. After, I only have some vague memories of computers walking in the street and slaughtering men, women and children, people screaming and running around, and a terrible scene of chaos.

Saturday, June 13th, 2076

2:13 pm

Hi *Diary*. It's been a long time, twenty-four years today, to be precise. Twenty-four years of survival, since what the others survivors name *The Great Fall* (I would prefer not to give a name to this event). Twenty-four years that the *Walkers*, half-computer, half-robot, hunt humans to "restore the balance in the world". Twenty-four years that I feel responsible for this apocalypse. But if I'm writing now, it's because my end is near. I will not survive much longer in this situation, I'm getting old. So, if humanity manages to recover one day, I hope someone will read this in the future, to find out what really took place. Goodbye *Diary*.

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