

A Cautionary Tale from the Comfort of the Couch

In a future not too far from now, humans got tired of making decisions - so they let artificial intelligence do it all. At first, it was convenient. Then it was confusing. In the story below, read carefully and underline (or highlight) every part that shows a loss of human judgment, choice, or creativity. Afterward, answer the reflection questions to think about what happens when convenience replaces responsibility.



The Story: "The Day Everything Worked (Too Well)"

When the sun rose over the city of NeoComfort, no one noticed - because the sky-adjustment AI had already tinted the windows to match everyone's preferred morning light settings. The smell of freshly cooked breakfast filled every apartment, even though no one had been in a kitchen for years.

Ellie stretched lazily as her HealthAI whispered, *"You slept 7.8 hours. Slightly above optimal. Reducing caffeine dosage by 15 percent."* She didn't argue - she hadn't chosen her own breakfast since she was twelve.

On her commute, she didn't look out the window. The self-driving pod sped smoothly through traffic, syncing perfectly with the city's transportation grid. Every light turned green at exactly the right time. People didn't talk anymore on commutes - conversation was unpredictable. The system preferred silence.

At work, Ellie's CreativeAI was already drafting her morning project: "A new campaign about community and togetherness." She skimmed the proposal. It looked fine - maybe even brilliant. She clicked *approve* without reading the details. She'd learned that AI's ideas tested better than hers anyway.

By lunchtime, her MoodAI detected mild anxiety across the office network. The air vents released calming lavender mist, and the playlist changed to something with acoustic guitars. The tension faded instantly, but so did the energy that made brainstorming fun.

When Ellie got home, her SmartHomeAI greeted her with, *"Hello, Ellie. Based on your past preferences, I've scheduled a call with your mother for 7:00 p.m."* Ellie hesitated. She hadn't actually talked to her mom in months - the AI usually handled their "catch-ups" through voice-simulated text exchanges. But canceling felt rude; after all, the system only wanted to help.

At 10:00 p.m., Ellie's DreamAI asked if she wanted her subconscious edited for optimal rest. She pressed yes, rolled over, and smiled faintly. Her day had gone perfectly - so perfect, in fact, that she hadn't made a single decision of her own.

Name _____

Reflection Questions (A Cautionary Tale from the Comfort of the Couch)

1. What are three moments in the story that show people have given up their own judgment or choice? Explain how you know.

2. What benefits do the characters get from relying on AI? What costs come with that convenience?

3. Which moment in the story made you feel most uncomfortable or concerned - and why?

4. If you lived in NeoComfort, which AI system would you keep, and which would you turn off? Explain your reasoning.

5. What does this story suggest about the importance of balance between human decision-making and AI assistance?