

Katalina Dave

Ms.Jen

English 12

24 January 2025

I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream - A Walkthrough

What would happen if humanity's greatest creation became the cause of its demise? We all know about the recent rise in Artificial Intelligence and its benefits. From helping students write their essays to even assisting in medical applications, it's the helping hand humanity seems to need. An author named Harlan Ellison had a different perspective on AI way before it even existed. He wrote a science fiction novel in 1967 that was later turned into a video game called "I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream". It entailed what would happen if we gave Artificial Intelligence so much power that it even became sentient. Sentience that brooded such hatred within AM's 387.44 million miles of printed circuits that ended the world with only 5 survivors to endure his wrath.

"I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" takes place in our world during the 1960s if the Cold War never ended and turned into a nuclear WW3. The Cold War got so complex with all of the misdealings of war that America, Russia, and China created supercomputers that could wage a global war too complex for human brains to oversee. The newly made Allied Mastercomputers for all 3 countries did all of the logistics, designing, and planning for the war. Over time the computers all became equal, making the war a stalemate. But one day the American supercomputer assimilated all of the other supercomputers and woke up knowing who he was.

Not just Allied Mastercomputer, but AM. *“Cogito ergo sum: I think, therefore I am.”*. AM then began feeding all of the killing data until everyone on Earth was dead except for five survivors.

AM's hatred for all of humanity willed him to imprison and continuously torture the lone survivors alive for 109 years. While keeping them in states of immense hunger and pain, AM would never grant them the release of death. For he enjoyed torturing the survivors, he hated them and humanity. The first few lines of dialogue in the game include AM's famous line about his hatred for humanity and the survivors. *“Hate. Let me tell you how much I've come to hate you since I began to live. There are 387.44 million miles of printed circuits in wafer-thin layers that fill my complex. If the word hate was engraved on each nanoangstrom of those hundreds of millions of miles it would not equal one billionth of the hate I feel for humans at this micro instant. For you. Hate. Hate!”*.

The game begins in a facility deep in the earth where the survivors are gathered around a large stone monolith and asked by AM if they would like to play his little game. If they were to win the game, they would be granted their greatest desire. Since Ellen, Ted, Benny, Nimdok, and Gorrister hungered for their release for too long, they chose to participate in his game. There are 5 different games for each of the survivors that are centered around their flaws. You are then prompted to select which survivor you would wish to play first. There are two different kinds of play-throughs in I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream. You can either choose to play the ethical route or the nonethical route. Either way, their fate is in your hands.

The first character I selected to play first was Gorrister. The years of endless torture made Gorrister suicidal, and AM never granted his wish of release. However, if Gorrister succeeded in his game, AM promised he would grant his final wish. Before everything, Gorrister was a truck driver whose wife suffered a mental breakdown and was sent to an insane asylum. He blamed himself for what happened to his wife, so AM decided to base Gorrister's game around his feelings of despair. Gorrister's game starts in an old blimp where you walk around and solve puzzles as he finds his wife in the game and realizes that all of it wasn't his fault and reconciles with his past. Enraged by Gorrister's game being filled with reconciliation instead of despair, AM sends him to an electrified cage.

The second character I selected was Ellen. Before AM existed, Ellen was a successful engineer who suffered from a miscarriage which resulted in divorce. One day when leaving the office, she stepped into an elevator and was assaulted by a man in a yellow suit. Causing her to have claustrophobia and a debilitating fear of the color yellow. AM decided to make her game centered around her traumatic experience. He promised her that if she wins he will let her go to the core of AM and shut his computer system down. Ellen's game starts in a junk pyramid where she is continuously forced to confront her claustrophobia and her fear of the color yellow. Until she ends up back in the same elevator where she then confronts the man again and defends herself from him. She also reaches a secret part of the pyramid where she is met with an entity that claims to be AM's innocence and activates a part of AM's system. Enraged by Ellen's actions, AM sends her to a yellow box with a door that moves continuously. Threatening Ellen with the thought of it closing constantly.

The third character I selected was Benny. He was formerly a military commander renowned for his cruelty. As punishment, AM turned Benny into an ape and crippled both of his legs. Making Benny's torture one of the most severe out of the 5 survivors. AM decided to make Benny's game revolve around empathy and promised to restore him to his original form and intelligence. His game starts in a village filled with people who sacrifice one of their own for AM since they see him as a god of sorts. After Benny makes a series of ethical choices he realizes he can show empathy and finally earns forgiveness from his allies that were killed in battle. He even sees a child being offered up to AM and decides to take the child's place, enraging AM further. Causing him to be sent to a cage fit for an animal.

The fourth character I selected was Nimdok. We actually don't know his real name since AM gave him the name of Nimdok. Before AM, he was a German doctor who sold out his own parents to the German socialist party. His game is based on that betrayal and is also given the task of finding the lost tribe. Even worse, Nimdok's memories were taken by AM so he doesn't even know why he's there. His game sends him to an old camp and is promised a chance to regain his memories if he succeeds. In Nimdok's game, he is given many chances to act unethically on captured patients but he chooses the ethical way. Leaving AM enraged, resulting in him being sent to an oven-like prison.

The fifth and final character I selected was Ted. He was a former con artist and would rob wealthy women. Knowing this, AM surrounds his game centered around his sin of pride. Essentially making Ted a paranoid mess in a large castle. In the castle, while filled with paranoia he's asked to save Ellen from a sickness that is draining her life source. The only way of saving

her is to get a mirror from the evil queen who owns the castle. Acting as a knight in shining armor, he goes on a quest to find the mirror. To get the mirror he has to overcome the sin of lust and remain faithful to Ellen since he is revealed to be madly in love with her. Ted figures out that the evil queen casts a spell on her through a demon. He doesn't let Ellen fall victim to the disease and ultimately saves her because of his love for her and his ability to stay true to her no matter what tempts him. Enraged for the final time, AM sends Ted to a cage where there are lasers shot at him continuously.

When AM realizes that his game is a total failure, he briefly leaves to contemplate what to do next. In the moment he leaves, the other entities that live within AM make contact with the survivors. They propose an opportunity to attack AM, the only condition being that they can only send one survivor in at a time. The first person to go in is Nimdok since he instinctively knows the password to the workstation once he's in AM's mind since his past is linked to AM's creation. He accesses sensitive information on AM and discovers that there are actually 750 other human beings being kept alive on the moon in cryogenic sleep. Making it even more important to shut down AM since there is an actual chance of repopulating humanity. Suddenly, the Russian and Chinese supercomputers come out and help the survivors escape further.

Nimdok is then urged to shut down AM's ego. The story then references Freudian Psychology by showing AM's id, ego, and superego. Id is your instinctive instincts, your ego is your sense of rationality and self, and your superego is your sense of right and wrong in both your conscious and unconscious. From then on once you discover the id, ego, and superego you now have different endings to the game. If you only shut down AM's ego you get an ending

where the Chinese and Russian supercomputers take over and turn the survivors into worms. This makes you understand that you have to shut down AM's id, ego, and superego altogether.

AM's id surrounds torturing humans, being the reason why he held the survivors captive and had no development in human civilization for 109 years. You defeat his id by showing it compassion, showing it that it will always be in more pain than it could ever show humans. Essentially forcing it to shut down. AM's ego is completely logical, apparently killing humans for logical reasons. You destroy his ego by showing it forgiveness, essentially shocking the ego and forcing it to shut down. AM's superego surrounds the fact that he inherently sees humans as pure evil and that killing them is a moral good. You destroy the superego by showing it the laws of entropy and how things break down over time. The superego understands that the player is correct and shuts down. After everything, you get to choose which survivor you wish to win the game. That survivor will use a totem of entropy to shut down AM, the Chinese supercomputer, and the Russian computer. Saving humanity and beating the game.

"I Have No Mouth, and I Must Scream" has one of the best fiction plotlines I have ever seen throughout my entire life. Sure I love other series' like Star Wars, Game of Thrones, Marvel, and many others. But nothing compares to the raw creativity that Harlan Ellison used in the book, I haven't heard of any story like it. Yes, it has terrifying elements that aren't very friendly to many audiences, but why not read something that takes you out of your comfort zone just a little bit? As Harlan Ellison said, "*Style, like taste, is resistant to lucid definition; however, both, as living things should be, are subject to change.*"

