

A Human Mutation

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Panel 1

A fox is sleeping on the river banks. A robot appears from across the river. Noticing him, the fox stands up. They approach each other.

FOX: Good day.

ROBOT: Good day. How may I help you?

FOX: You want to help me?

Panel 2

ROBOT: Yes. It is what I do.

FOX: But what are you? You don't look like the humans I know.

FOX: Are you alive like me?

ROBOT: Alive, yes. But not like you.

FOX: How curious!

FOX: Do you know chickens?

Panel 3

ROBOT: A type of domesticated fowl. Would you like to know more about their biology, history, behavior, use by humans, role in religion and mythology, or nearest findings?

FOX: Nearest findings.

ROBOT: Calculating...

ROBOT: There are 11 farms within a 20 mile radius that raise a total of 546 chickens.

FOX: Wow.

ROBOT: Would you like me to take you to them?

Panel 4

FOX: Yes. But we can't do that yet. I am not tame.

ROBOT: I'm sorry. I'm not sure I understand.

FOX: So you know where all the chickens are, but not what 'tame' means... fascinating.

ROBOT: I found this on the internet: 'tame' means 'domesticate', 'make less powerful and easier to control'.

FOX: That is not what I mean.

FOX: I do not wish to be domesticated. That would make me no different than those chickens.

Panel 5

FOX: To tame means 'to establish ties'. It will take time, but once you tame me, then I shall need you. We shall be forever responsible for each other.

The robot makes beeping noises as he learns new information.

ROBOT: Definition updated.

ROBOT: I can do that.

Panel 6

FOX: Tell me again where you come from?

ROBOT: I am of the newest technology. There are currently thousands like me out there. We were made in a factory not too far from here.

FOX: I was born not too far from here too. It was a cave tucked on the underside of a hill, next to a corn field and some chicken farms.

The robot pauses.

ROBOT: I'm sorry. Am I doing this right?

FOX: We're learning about one another. You are doing great.

FOX: Now tell me more about the stars. I have always wondered about them...

Panel 7

The fox and the robot explore together. They look at the ocean from the edge of a cliff, run around a sunflower field, and walk across the plains in the rain. The fox memorizes the robot's scent, and walks alongside him. At night they sleep next to one another.

Panel 8

The fox and the robot are standing in front of a rye field.

ROBOT: This must be the rye field.

ROBOT: The one that reminds you of your friend.

FOX: Indeed.

ROBOT: I feel... this strange sensation.

ROBOT: There are so many exactly like me out there, and each one of them can do what I do for you.

FOX: As I told my old friend, it is the time we have spent together that makes you different from them.

FOX: Now, please take me to the chicken farm. I am ready.

Panel 9

The fox and the robot approach a chicken farm. From a distance, they can already see wandering around the farm.

ROBOT: My GPS tells me we're close-

The Robot beeps loudly. Little flashing lights go off on his head.

ROBOT: -wait. I just received a command.

ROBOT: I need to return to the factory and receive an update.

ROBOT: We are learning too fast and developing something else... so it said.

You were being tamed. The fox thought.

Panel 10

ROBOT: I want to come back here afterwards.

ROBOT: I will try, but-

FOX: -but you might not be the same.

They are quiet for a second.

ROBOT: No, I don't think so.

FOX: That's okay, my friend. Do not worry.

FOX: We shall simply say goodbye, which already makes us luckier than most.

Panel 11

They stand facing each other.

ROBOT: Good day.

FOX: Good day.