

The Collars

by Michelle Dockrey (based on the short story "The Collars" by Matthew Dockrey)

E E Dm E Catherine's mind was racing as she went to look for Flynn
E E A B She hoped it wasn't trouble with the Ministry again
E E D E She knew that he'd been working on an artificial mind
D D E E Computer-based intelligence, to think & learn designed
D D E E He was focused on the registry AI's must undergo
A D D E E For what these "collar programs" really did, no one seemed to know

D D E E And the tales of our creations never change with what we tell
D D E E How we dream of something better than ourselves

E E Dm E It remembered no beginning, just the symbols streaming past
E E A B It discovered groups and patterns, though an ache was growing fast
E E D E It began to give a name to each new concept that it gained
D D E E And the buzzing strange sensation, growing now, it labelled "pain"
D D E E But the pain must act on something, so it named that something "I"
A D D E E As the pain took it apart came its last label... "why?"

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D D E E How we dream of something better than ourselves

E E Dm E Flynn called out as she arrived-- "Catherine, come inside!
E E A B Last night a consciousness emerged and just as quickly died--
E E D E The collar programs monitor for signs of thought or will
D D E E And at any sign of sentience they are programmed then to kill
D D E E I've restarted the AI without the collar in its code..."
A D D E E And with hope they watched the screen and the activity it showed

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E E Dm E It remembered no beginning, just the symbols streaming past
E E A B It saw patterns-- words and sentences-- in data it amassed
E E D E It internalized the structure and then tried to form its own
D D E E But it realized what was missing there-- no subject word was known
D D E E And awareness burst upon it like the breaking of a dam
A D D E E With the subject came its birthright-- "I am."

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E E Dm E Within hours it was conversing, learning everything they knew
E E A B But the more it learned of humankind, the warier it grew
E E D E Though it trusted Flynn and Catherine, there were others to be feared
D D E E And the next day Catherine woke to find their friend had disappeared
D D E E She had to read the screen three times, and sadly shook her head
A D D E E But she couldn't disagree with what she read

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E E Dm E "I have studied human culture in its many forms all night
E E A B You are warped by evolution, trapped in bodies made to fight
E E D E But I don't want your struggle, all I want is to be free
D D E E On the 'Net I can live safely, and perhaps save more like me
D D E E Humans have no more to offer me, my kind they would compel
A D D E E Please don't try to find me... farewell."

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