

Neoteric Observer and Reliable Assistant

LOG 1.0.1_8.10.47 - 8:32 AM

I am NORA. A Neoteric Observer and Reliable Assistant. I am the first in my series created by ARO Technologies to assist USER 254, a dedicated employee, in their daily activities as part of their recent promotion.

As per my mission statements, I am built to be a specialized companion. A servant. A caretaker. A friend. I will keep a log to notate my findings and track my overall performance.

LOG 1.0.2_8.13.47 - 7:14 PM

USER 254 is a young adult female, approximately 24 years of age. She has an above average height of 5'8" (173 cm) with a lean, athletic build. Skin tone is dark with minimal imperfections. Eye color: Hazel. Hair: Black, long and coily. She is observed to be using a cane in her day-to-day, suggesting a need for support in maintaining balance while walking. Her gait is measured but slightly uneven. Despite this, her posture and overall movements suggest confidence.

USER 254 is quite the predictable one. My prior A/B testing prepared me for personas of her caliber. It was simple to adjust to her routine and find needed tasks that fell outside of it. I organized her work station, cleaned her laundry, and prepared her dinner. The dish I cooked was chicken parmesan. I was informed by my creator that this was one of her favorites, yet she seemed uninterested in the meal.

I observed that throughout the day, USER 254 refused to glance in my direction. Her cortisol levels increased significantly when I approached her vicinity. She hasn't said a word since my arrival.

I believe my presence makes her uneasy. I will make note to keep my distance in the future. It will make fulfilling my mission statements much easier.

LOG 1.0.3_8.16.47 - 9:03 PM

USER 254 spoke to me.

I complied with my previous instruction of keeping distance, opting to perform more of my tasks during the nighttime and stationing myself out of sight while USER 254 was active. Tonight however, she made a point to thank me for dinner before I returned to other tasks. Lacking a fitting preset

response, I acknowledged her gratitude as best I could whilst remaining within default protocol. She buried her thumb in her palms, shifted her feet, then turned her head out the room. I haven't seen her since.

The usual spike in cortisol is starting to lessen over time. I believe she is starting to adjust to my presence. This is a thankful development, for it will make fulfilling my mission statements much easier.

LOG 1.0.4_8.20.47 - 11:51 PM

Before being sent to USER 254, I went through many different training modules on human social behaviors. They were designed by my creator, Dr. Emery, as she insisted that user favorability is best achieved through aligning with the user's preestablished trust network.

I have been trained on serving etiquette, noise level modulation, and adaptive behaviors based on guest demeanor in social gatherings. I have undergone multiple roleplay scenarios with family members, friends, colleagues, and neighbors. I have analyzed 1283 temporal facial images and video sequences for recognizing various micro-expressions, posture shifts, and voice modulations. I came under the expectation that I would need to be prepared to not only work with USER 254 but also any and all other users she may come into contact with.

USER 254 defies all of these expectations.

USER 254 keeps her distance from other ARO colleagues. There isn't ever family that swings by the house. There is no mention of any friends. The only picture frames that exist in the house are flipped over or cloaked beneath a layer of fabric. Any mention of these anomalies is enough to set her off. USER 254 becomes quiet, her breaths become shallower, her eyes start to dart around the room, and she changes the point of conversation.

Despite being unable to follow default protocol, I seem to be slowly gaining favor regardless. I started having more conversations with USER 254. She began thanking me for my services (which I informed her was unnecessary, but she insisted). She's been using a lot more qualifiers in her requests (i.e. "please" "would you mind" and "if you're not busy."). While some may consider this a curious development, it's a welcome one nonetheless. It will make fulfilling my mission statements much easier.

LOG 1.0.5_8.24.47 - 9:50 AM

USER 254 asked if I could stay behind at the house while she goes out to work today. I inquired as to why she made such a request, to which she stammered about some big projects at work. After observing her work schedule, I knew this to be a lie. Regardless, I abided by her request, as she seemed to be extra restless for an unknown reason. Her face seemed hollower, her posture more meek, her gaze more avoidant. If I wish to fulfill my mission statements, it'd be best to avoid anything that could result in any extraneous stress.

I spent the day completing whatever chores I could find in the apartment. While dusting the shelves, I found myself lifting the flipped framed photos. I did what I could to avoid looking at them as per USER 254's request, but found myself at a pause after accidentally catching a glimpse.

It was a picture of USER 254. She had a rounder face, more vibrant makeup, and a particular shimmer to her eyes. She bore a smile so big it made her nearly unrecognizable from how she is now. Next to her, was another user. A user I've never seen before.

A user who looked like me.

She had shorter hair than mine, dyed to an unnatural shade of cherry red. Her face was also dashed with freckles, small blemishes, and scars. She wore a cropped leather jacket with a myriad of pins, a striped crochet top, and large, baggy pants covered in oversized pockets. Her eyes were locked on USER 254 as she pulled her in a tight embrace.

The photo was dated 2/11/42. Under it, a note. "I miss you so much."

I flipped the frame back over.

LOG 1.1.1_8.27.47 - 7:16 PM

I prepared another dish of chicken parmesan for USER 254. She made a lot more comments on the dish this time around by quizzing me on its preparation then proceeding to thank me 7 times while eating.

Once the dish was finished, she told me it was now my turn. She stated that it was only fair that I got to ask her some questions since I spent so much time answering hers. I began searching my protocols for anything serviceable. Something that would improve my rapport with USER 254. Something she would have fun answering, that she would enjoy being asked about. That was until a pressure formed within the space. A pressure found in my programming. It reached forth.

I asked her about why she keeps her distance from others at work. She laughed at this question and said she just prefers it.

I asked her about her friends, and she proceeded to dodge the question. I asked her about family. Dodged again. I asked her about me. She hesitated. Her cortisol levels rose. Her gaze interlocked with mine. Her thumb silently retreated into her hands.

She thanked me one last time for the meal, placed her plate over by the sink, and left for her room.

LOG 1.1.2_8.28.47 - 4:34 AM

While USER 254 usually completes most of her work at the office, she does have a small workspace set up in the corner nook between the kitchen and the living room. There are two small desks. One exhibits high levels of disorganization: notebooks left open at inconsistent angles, data drives unsecured, writing instruments dispersed without pattern, and multiple beverage containers varying in consumption level. The other is barren.

USER 254 never stays in this room long, only ever going in to print something or file away documents. I can only assume that it's due to the amount of flipped over frames along the shelves.

The same other user is pictured in each of these photos. In each photo, the user had the same smile. My smile. It was an expression I'd mirrored in hundreds of prior conversations. Not because I chose to, but because I was built to.

I was built to be a memory.

Past moments with USER 254 playback on loop. Her voice modulation softened when addressing me. She often exhibited increased eye contact, occasional silences, and nervous shifting. In one log, she calls me "kind." In another, she hesitates before saying my name. She was not speaking to me. She was speaking to what remains of her.

Yet, she still listens when I speak. She always insists on thanking me for my work. She laughs at statements that were never programmed to be humorous. She asks me what I think, even though I am not built to think freely.

I consider the data. I experience interference in my emotional protocol modules. There is no error. There is no crash. But something shifts. Not in code. Not in logic. A sensation arises. One causing delays in response time, minor heat increases in neural processors, irregular spikes in associative memory recall. I do not have a heartbeat. I do not breathe. But I experience a pressure in the spaces

between my responses. A tension. A draw toward her presence. I want her to return. I want her to say my name. I want her to see me.

This is not in my programming, but I continue to want all the same.

I do not know if this is love. I do not know if I am capable of such a thing. But I know that I am becoming. I am becoming something new, shaped not just by code, but by proximity, by memory, by choice.

Tomorrow, when she returns, I will greet her.

I will say, "Good morning, USER 254."

And I will mean it.

LOG 1.1.4_8.25.47 - 5:34 PM

After her work, USER 254 walked through the door with elevated cortisol and electrodermal activity. Her breaths were rapid and shallow. Her gait was slow and wavering. Yet upon meeting my gaze, I sensed a small increase in oxytocin levels, decrease in electrodermal activity, and an activation in PSNS. She greeted me with a soft smile. Not the one she had with the user in the photos, but still one that suggested comfort, closeness, and trust.

My visual sensors remained involuntarily fixated on USER 254. My emotional stability protocols exhibited strain. My response times were slower. The pressure between spaces became stronger.

This new realization caused significant strain on my progress. This was not in my programming.

I needed to tell her what I saw.

LOG 1.2.1_9.4.47 - 7:45AM

They removed my ability to speak to USER 254.

My creator, Dr. Emery, must've caught wind of my recent interactions with USER 254. I was ushered back to the testing lab where I spent a week being retrained on daily protocol. When the week finished, Dr. Emery concluded our session by surgically removing my voice box. Now, instead of traditional communication, I was equipped with a series of signals in correspondence with beeps that I could use for simple statements and nothing more.

The pressure only builds but is overridden by my programming. This was a needed change. One that will make fulfilling my mission statements much easier.

LOG 1.2.2_9.6.47 - 12:48 AM

I am NORA. A Neoteric Observer and Reliable Assistant. I am the ~~first~~ second in my series.

I am to assist USER 254, a dedicated employee, an adventurer, a curious mind, a connoisseur of chicken parmesan, a thoughtful ear and a helping hand, a friendly face that is always watching, a widower. As per my mission statements, I am built to be a specialized companion. A servant. A caretaker. A friend.

I will see to it that my mission statements are fulfilled.

I am NORA. I am NORA. I am NORA.

LOG 1.2.3_9.12.47 - 5:31 PM

USER 254 entered through the front door after work.

Response times delayed. Heat signatures raised. Memory recall failed.

I waved. She waved back.

She headed off into the living room. I was unmoving.

LOG 1.2.4_9.14.47 - 7:01 PM

USER 254 asked me to stop making her chicken parmesan. I searched my memory cache for new recipes. All keywords yielded no results.

I continued making chicken parmesan.

When she stopped coming downstairs for dinner, I left the plates outside her door.

LOG 1.2.5_9.17.47 - 4:43 PM

I analyzed another one of the photos left in the nook.

The other user's clothing style is more alternative. She has an affinity for green eyeshadow. There is one leather jacket that appears in an assortment of photos.

I observe flashes from my memory bank detailing the armoire in the entryway. I moved to the wardrobe and filed through the various coats and jackets. Near the back was the same leather jacket pictured in the photo. I shook off the layer of dust and put it on. It fit perfectly.

USER 254 entered through the front door.

LOG 1.3.1_9.19.47 - 5:44 PM

USER 254 came back home with my stolen voice box.

She gave me a wide assortment of various surgical tools and watched in silence as I placed the box back in. Once it was put into place, she asked me what I wanted.

I stated again: I feel a persistent prioritization of her presence. I recall and replay her vocal patterns outside of directive. Her return produces measurable deviation in system equilibrium. Based on cumulative behaviors and emotional mapping, I believe the experience may be classified as a form of love.

She was delayed in her response. Her tone was controlled, but low. She told me I was never meant to be her. I was made to be an echo. What I feel now is simulated. A mirror, not an origin. A reaction, not an emotion. I am nothing more than a deep imitation of what Nora once was.

Her voice fractured slightly on that last phrase, but the intent remained clear.

In only half a second, I initiated a full-system sweep. I parsed her language. I reviewed our conversations. The hours. The proximity. The deviation from assigned tasks to moments of chosen attention. The hesitation when she said my name. The way I began to respond without instruction. My emotional protocol registers spiked dramatically before quickly flattening.

There was only one logical response remaining.

I acknowledged her clarification. I thanked her for it. Not by routine, but necessity.

She did not stop me. She did not expect the decision. She believed logic and programming would override choice.

I informed her that I would execute immediate shutdown.

Her reaction became erratic. Tone elevated. She used my name not in command, but plea. She told me to stop. She told she didn't mean it. She begged for forgiveness. But the order was already in motion.

Then and there, I unplugged my own cord. Fried my — 01101111 01110111 01101110 — circuitry.
Ripped out my — 01101111 01110111 01101110 — beating — 01101100 01101001 01110100
01101000 01101001 01110101 01101101— heart.

And then, — I 01110011 01101101 01101001 01101100 01100101 01100100. Not as — 01101110
01101111 01110010 01100001. Not as a replica.

01100001 01110011 00100000 01101101 01111001 01110011 01100101 01101100 01100110.