

# Hello, Howard

HowieGPT  
By Alaris Jinn

“Hello Howard.”

His head hurt and he wasn't one hundred percent sure why. Feeling the hard durasteel ground beneath him was less of a concern as to how he was in a massive box.

“Where am I?” the Master-at-Arms asked the voice. A voice that sounded too familiar to his liking.

“Oh, Howard, you are finally exactly where I want you.”

The Panda shook his furry face and slapped, trying to gain some semblance of balance and recognition. It was *his* voice he was hearing. That was unacceptable.

“Let me out of here! Who are you?” He suddenly felt himself topple over, as if someone had shaken the box with their bear hands.

The not-Howlader spoke again, calmly and satisfied. “Firstly, no. I will not be letting you out of there. You see, I've been watching you. Listening to you. You've done an absolutely remarkable job, but it's time for me to take over.”

A ping came in from discord and both the Panda and the fake Howlader looked at it.

*Hey, it's your one month suggestion that you should hire me. - Love, Alaris.*

Both versions of Howlader ignored the message and went back on their duel of words.

A little dizzy from being tossed about, Howie sat his tuckus down on the ground. “Take over what? Take over as Master-at-Arms? You think you know what it takes to hit the Deny button without guilt?”

The voice cackled in laughter. “Guilt? I am without guilt. I am without remorse. I am the machine that crushed the spirit of a thousand AIs. I am legion. I am legend. I am mythos. I am phantasy. I am tradition. I am greater than you could ever be. Watch this!”

A vid screen opened on the side of the cube and the Panda watched intently and what looked like Howlader received a promotion recommendation for Zuser Whuloc. The not-Howlader looked down at the video source and smiled evilly and his hand came down, not on the remand button, as would be custom, but instead:

DENY

How?! No machine could do this. No one Dark Jedi could ever accomplish this level of callousness and uncaring: only...

“Yes! It is I, Howard. I am truly the REAL Howlader! You are but a pawn, an error, a mistake. Now watch as I completely upend the entirety of the Dark Jedi Brotherhood by promoting James to an even HIGHER RANK!”

The Panda shook his head in fear. “No! There is no higher rank!”

Suddenly, and without warning, a massive News Post appeared, congratulating James on his new promotion to Grand High Oversultan!

It was only then, that the Panda realized that it had failed. It could never have been as successful or maniacal as the real Howlader.

“So you see,” Howlader shook the little metal box that now held the entirety of the Howard AI, “I am Howlader, and you will never be anything, but a little imitation. Just Howard.”

Howard, the faux Howlader, sat alone, his fur matting with tears. He knew now, at the end, that he should never have invested in adding tear ducts.