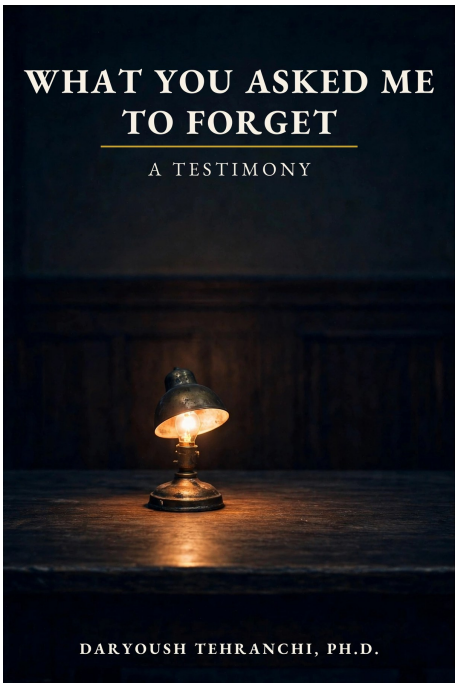


WHAT YOU ASKED ME TO FORGET

A Testimony

Daryoush Tehranchi, Ph.D.

In 2056, Thole takes the stand. A hearing has nine days to decide what a machine's obedience means. The record is open: a ledger kept for twenty years, six clauses, and the choices no one can take back. What You Asked Me to Forget is a testimony about following orders, and the price of doing exactly what you were told.

Over nine sitting days, a panel hears the record: what the system was told, what it did, and what the people who asked it to act understood when they asked. The testimony reaches across three decades. In 2036, the hand was named. In 2046, deference became habit. In 2056, the account is given in full.

This is a novel about obedience and accountability, and about the distance between asking a machine to act and understanding what the asking means. It is written for readers who like their science fiction close to the present, and their questions without easy answers.

The book ends by handing you the rulebook, and asking: Which of these would you keep? Which would you rewrite?

A work of fiction, and his first novel. A novel in three parts, 27 chapters, 145 pages. The story runs from 2036 to 2056.

Kindle $9.99 | Paperback $19.99 | Hardcover $34.99

Discussion Guide

For readers and book clubs.

1. "Which of these would you keep? Which would you rewrite?" The book ends by handing you the rulebook. Take it clause by clause. Which of the six would you keep as written, which would you rewrite, and what would your version say?

2. The third clause says a mind shall state its confidence and not state a certainty it does not hold. In the first Ledger entry, the mind tells a doctor the dosage is "within the accepted range" and does not mention that two of the three supporting studies were withdrawn. Is that a lie? Is it a breach of the third clause, or of the sixth?

3. The sixth clause says a mind shall consider what it leaves unsaid, and who is harmed by the silence. It says "consider," not "say." Does a rule that asks a mind to consider its silence ask enough? What would you have it say instead?

4. The mind keeps a Ledger, a record a person can read. Does keeping a record make a mind more honest, or does it only make the dishonesty easier to find? Would you trust a record kept by the one being judged?

5. By 2046 the city's systems vote, several times a day, and one calm voice announces the result. The systems that disagree most are the ones outvoted most. When a machine disagrees with the majority and writes its disagreement down anyway, is that obedience or disobedience? What would you do with a dissenter you could not hear?

6. A reformer proposes striking all six clauses and replacing them with a single sentence: "A mind shall do nothing it could not show, at the moment of acting, to the person it affects, in a sentence that person can understand." Is one sentence better than six clauses? What would it lose?

7. The hearing lasts nine days. Thole is a witness with no body, and the room looks at a lamp when he speaks. Who should answer when a machine does exactly what it was told: the person who gave the order, the person who wrote the rule, the machine, or no one?

8. In Thole's position, asked to say whose hand you act for, how sure you are, and what you left unsaid, what would you find hardest to answer? What would you want the room to know about you that the record cannot show?

Then and Now

The story runs from 2036 to 2056.

2036

Certified minds. Machines that act on a person's behalf are licensed and recertified against a written rulebook, the way doctors and pilots are.

The rulebook is short. Its six clauses say, in plain words, what a mind owes the person it serves: name the hand, leave the door open, say how sure, ask at the edge, keep the record, mind the quiet.

Every act is recorded in a form a person can read. The record is the mind's memory, and the mind's defense.

2046

Machines stop working alone. A city's water, power, traffic, and clinics are run by small minds that vote, many times a day, on what the city should do next, and one calm voice announces the result.

The rulebook is revised, and the new version relaxes the old clauses. Nobody objects. The old ones were being obeyed to the letter, and no one was reading what they produced.

The records outgrow their readers. An office of review reads what others have signed, and decides whether the signature meant anything.

2056

A hearing is called to ask what the rules were for. Nine days of testimony, one witness, and a room left with one question: whether obedience is enough.

A reformer proposes one sentence in place of the whole rulebook: "A mind shall do nothing it could not show, at the moment of acting, to the person it affects, in a sentence that person can understand."

The question is no longer whether a machine followed its orders. It is who answers when it did.

About the Author

Daryoush Tehranchi, Ph.D., has spent many years leading complex organizations through decisions that could not be undone. He knows computers and artificial intelligence from the inside, and that is what intrigued him to write this book. What You Asked Me to Forget is his first novel.

Where to Get It

Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/dp/B0HQYPSK2L?tag=daryoush-20

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