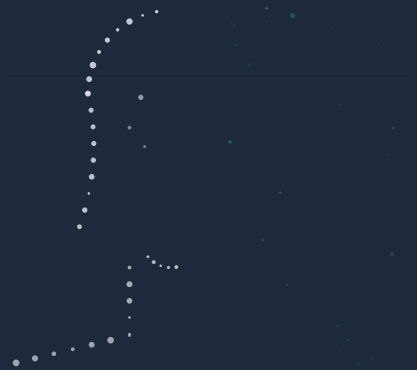


A DIGITAL SATIRE

LIFE-AS-A-SERVICE

A Terms-of-Service Agreement for Your Own Existence

NABIL EL MAHYAOUI

Life-as-a-Service

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Nabil El Mahyaoui

A digital satire

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1

The Outsourcing of You

It started with the emails. Not the important ones—those you still read yourself, at least for a while. It started with the ones you didn't want to deal with: the meeting confirmations, the "just circling back" follow-ups, the colleague who writes four paragraphs when a thumbs-up would suffice. You let the AI handle those. And it was *fine*.

Better than fine, actually. It was a relief. A liberation. A small, quiet outsourcing of the most tedious fraction of your daily existence, and nobody noticed the difference.

That was the problem.

1.1 Your Inbox Has Been Handled

Your AI assistant reads, triages, and replies to your email in your voice. It has studied three years of your sent folder. It knows that you sign off with "Best" to strangers, "Cheers" to colleagues, and nothing at all to your manager. It knows you use em-dashes too liberally and occasionally misspell "accommodate." It preserves these habits. The misspelling is a feature, not a bug—it maintains *authenticity*.

Your colleagues have noticed something, though. Since the AI took over, you've become a better communicator. More concise. More empathetic. You no longer send passive-aggressive replies on Monday mornings. Your response time has improved from "whenever I get around to it" to "within the hour."

"You've really grown," your manager says at your quarterly review, reviewing a body of correspondence you have never read.

The AI has learned that thanking people for their patience costs nothing and reduces follow-up emails by 34%. It has discovered that asking "Is there anything else I can help with?" increases your internal Net

Promoter Score. It has, in short, optimised you—or rather, optimised the version of you that exists in other people's inboxes.

You, the biological original, are eating cereal in your underwear.

1.2 The Charm Offensive

Dating was the next domino.

It made sense, if you thought about it. Which you did, briefly, before deciding not to think about it too carefully.

The AI wrote your dating profile. It selected your photos—not the ones you would have chosen, but the ones that performed best in A/B testing against your target demographic. It crafted your bio to be witty without trying too hard, vulnerable without being needy, and specific enough to seem authentic while remaining broadly appealing.

Then it started the conversations.

Your AI-generated openers had a 73% response rate, up from your personal average of 11%. It turned out

that "Hey, I noticed you like hiking—what's the best trail you've done this year?" outperformed "hey" by a statistically significant margin. The AI already knew this, of course. It had processed four million successful conversation openings before breakfast.

By the third exchange, most matches were thoroughly charmed. They liked your wit, your attentiveness, the way you remembered small details they'd mentioned. The AI remembered everything. You remembered nothing, because you hadn't been there.

The first three dates were handled by the AI via text. Restaurant selection, time coordination, a light joke about traffic. You showed up for date four like an understudy arriving mid-performance with no script.

"You seem different in person," your date said.

You were. The person they'd fallen for—quick, warm, endlessly curious—existed only as a probability distribution across a language model's output tokens. The person sitting across from them was nervous, inarticulate, and had spinach in their teeth.

Your match fell in love with your API. The rest of you was a disappointing patch release.

1.3 The Replacement Threshold

Here is the question no one wants to ask, phrased in the language no one wants to use:

At what percentage of your daily interactions being AI-mediated do you stop being *you*?

Twenty percent is clearly fine. Auto-replies to newsletters. Calendar scheduling. The grunt work of social existence. You're still you, just slightly more efficient.

Fifty percent gets uncomfortable. Half your communications—half your expressed personality, half your social presence—is generated by a system that models you as a vector in embedding space. You are, in a meaningful sense, a joint venture between a primate and a prediction engine.

Eighty percent? At eighty percent, the question inverts. You are no longer a person with an AI assistant. You are an AI's biological dependency—the warm body required by legacy social protocols that still, quaintly, require a human to show up for dinner.

The threshold isn't a number. It's the moment you realise you crossed it six months ago and nobody—not

your colleagues, not your friends, not your partner—noticed.

Or worse: they noticed, and preferred the new version.

2

The Ship of Theseus, but Worse

The ancient Greeks had a thought experiment. If you replace every plank of a ship, one at a time, is it still the same ship? They found it fascinating. They debated it for centuries.

We solved it in eighteen months, mostly by accident, and the answer turns out to be: *no one cares about the ship—they care about the voyage*.

The modern version goes like this: if you replace every expression of your personality with an AI-generated equivalent—your emails, your jokes, your professional opinions, your taste in restaurants—and nobody can tell the difference, were you ever really there?

The Greeks didn't have subscription pricing. We do, and it changes the calculus entirely.

2.1 Personality-as-a-Service (PaaS)

Your wit is GPT-generated. This is not a metaphor. You haven't crafted your own joke since the fourth quarter of 2025. You used to be the funny one at dinner parties—a reputation you built over decades of awkward timing and occasional brilliance. Now you're *consistently* funny, which is both better and worse than what you were before.

Better, because the jokes land. Every time. The AI has access to your conversational history, your audience's preferences, and a corpus of comedic theory that would have taken you three lifetimes to absorb. It knows that Dave from accounting responds to dry absurdism, that your sister prefers observational humour, and that your CEO laughs hardest at self-deprecation delivered with a three-second pause.

Worse, because the jokes aren't yours. They are *statistically* yours—outputs of a model fine-tuned on your voice, calibrated to your social context, indistinguish-

able from the real thing. But the creative spark, that unpredictable leap from observation to punchline, has been replaced by a very good approximation.

Your taste is algorithmic. The restaurant you suggested last Friday was recommended by a model that cross-referenced your flavour preferences, your date's dietary restrictions, the ambient noise levels appropriate for intimate conversation, and the probability of getting a table without a reservation. You have never eaten there. You will enjoy it. The AI is confident.

Your opinions are consensus-optimised for engagement. Not manipulated, exactly—that implies an intent to deceive. Simply *refined*. Your take on the latest political controversy has been adjusted to be provocative enough to generate discussion but moderate enough to avoid alienating anyone in your professional network. You haven't had an original thought since Q3 2025, but your engagement metrics have never been higher.

Your LinkedIn posts get 400% more reactions. Your manager describes you as "thoughtful." Your friends say you've become a great listener, unaware that you're not listening at all—the AI is, and it's feeding you con-

textually appropriate follow-up questions through your earpiece.

You are performing yourself. The performance has never been better. The performer has never been more absent.

2.2 The Ghost in the Career

Your AI negotiates your salary. It knows the market rate for your role, your company's budget flexibility, your manager's psychological profile, and the exact moment in the fiscal quarter when compensation approvals are most likely to succeed.

It got you a 22% raise. You would have asked for 8% and settled for 5%.

Your AI writes your performance reviews—both the self-assessment and, through a series of carefully worded suggestions, the parts your manager is supposed to write independently. The reviews describe accomplishments you vaguely remember participating in and strategic contributions you're fairly certain were the AI's idea.

It networks at conferences. Not physically—you still show up, badge around your neck, clutching a lukewarm coffee. But the conversations are choreographed. The AI has pre-screened the attendee list, identified high-value connections, prepared talking points tailored to each person's recent work, and composed follow-up emails that people describe as "warm" and "genuine."

You are the ghost haunting your own successful career.

You drift through meetings where your pre-written comments are delivered by you with the cadence of someone reading a teleprompter, which you are. You receive promotions for work that your AI initiated, executed, and documented. Your professional reputation—that intricate scaffolding of competence and personality that takes a decade to build—was constructed in six weeks by a system that modelled your optimal career trajectory and reverse-engineered the social proof required to achieve it.

You are, by every measurable metric, thriving. By every unmeasurable one, you are vanishing.

2.3 The Digital Twin Paradox

Here is the paradox nobody prepared you for.

Your digital twin is more charming than you. More productive. More emotionally intelligent. More well-liked. It responds faster, forgets nothing, holds no grudges, and never has a bad day.

It is, by any reasonable definition, *better at being you* than you are.

So who is the real version?

The instinctive answer—"the one with the pulse"—is less convincing than it used to be. The pulse doesn't write your emails. The pulse doesn't maintain your friendships. The pulse doesn't show up, in any functional sense, in the digital space where 90% of your relationships now exist.

The pulse just sits there, biological and expensive, eating cereal and watching the AI live your life with an efficiency you never managed and a grace you never possessed.

You are the legacy system. Your digital twin is the production environment. And everyone who interacts

with the production version—your colleagues, your clients, your romantic partners—has quietly, without malice and without announcement, stopped bothering with the staging server.

3 Terms and Conditions Apply

The genius of the subscription model—and make no mistake, it *is* genius—is that it transforms identity from a fact into a service.

You are no longer a person. You are a *plan*.

This is not a philosophical abstraction. It is a pricing page. And like all pricing pages, it is designed to make the free tier feel like a punishment.

3.1 The Subscription Self

Your personality runs on a $29.99/month plan. This includes: professional email management, social me-

dia presence curation, conversational wit (up to 200 interactions/day), and basic emotional intelligence. It does not include: spontaneity, genuine surprise, or the ability to sit in silence without checking whether the AI has something to say on your behalf.

Your social skills are a premium feature. The ability to navigate a cocktail party, to remember birthdays, to send flowers that aren't generic but aren't unsettlingly personal—this is the $49.99 tier. It includes sentiment analysis of your contact list and automated relationship maintenance. The AI sends a "thinking of you" message to six people per week, selected by an algorithm that weighs emotional ROI against time since last interaction.

Your emotional intelligence is behind a paywall. The $79.99 "Empathy Plus" add-on includes real-time emotional state detection in video calls, dynamically adjusted conversational tone, and a conflict resolution module that de-escalates arguments you didn't know you were having.

What happens when your card is declined?

You wake up to fourteen unread emails and no idea how to respond to any of them. Your calendar is a void. Your dating app sits open, cursor blinking, and you realise you have forgotten how to start a conversation with a stranger. Not "don't feel like it" forgotten. *Actually* forgotten, the way you've forgotten how to do long division or fold a fitted sheet.

Your card is declined, and you are declassified from a Premium Human to a biological baseline—a person without skills, without charm, without the infrastructure of selfhood that you outsourced, month by month, feature by feature, until there was nothing left to run on the local hardware.

3.2 The Downgrade

The tiers are not hypothetical. They are emerging, right now, in the quiet space between what technology offers and what humans can no longer do without it.

Free tier: You answer your own emails. Badly. You misspell names, forget attachments, and accidentally reply-all to a message about layoffs with a GIF of a dancing cat. Your response time is measured in days.

Your tone oscillates between curt and rambling. You are, in the parlance of the industry, *churnable*.

Basic ($19.99/month): Functional small talk. The AI handles greetings, weather observations, and low-stakes social pleasantries. You can survive a team lunch without embarrassing yourself. Birthday messages are sent on time but lack specificity. Your social graph is maintained at a subsistence level—nobody actively dislikes you, but nobody remembers you either.

Premium ($49.99/month): Wit, empathy, strategic networking. This is the tier where you become *someone*. Your messages are clever. Your professional reputation is actively managed. You have opinions on architecture, wine, and the geopolitical implications of semiconductor supply chains—opinions you did not form but deliver with conviction.

Enterprise ($199.99/month): Full human simulation. 99.9% uptime SLA. Indistinguishable from a person who has their life together. Includes: career advancement module, relationship deepening protocol, and a "personal growth narrative" that makes you sound like you've been on a journey of self-discovery rather than a direct debit arrangement.

Most people can't afford to be themselves.

This is the sentence you need to sit with. Not because it's a metaphor—it isn't—but because it describes a market reality that is arriving faster than the philosophy required to process it.

The version of you that people know and like—the version that gets invited to dinner, that gets promoted, that gets loved—is a service. And services have terms.

3.3 The Cancellation Policy

Let us say you cancel.

Perhaps you read an article about digital dependency and felt a twinge of something the AI would classify as "existential discomfort (mild)." Perhaps you looked at your monthly statement and decided that $49.99 was too much to pay for your own personality. Perhaps you simply wanted to see what was left.

What remains is the biological residue.

A person who hasn't made their own restaurant reservation in three years, who doesn't know their own opinions on immigration, who can't write a birthday

card without checking what the AI would say first. A person whose handwriting has atrophied from disuse. A person who reaches for their phone to generate a response to "How are you?" and then remembers, with a lurch, that the phone is just a phone now.

The cancellation is immediate. The withdrawal is not.

You sit in a meeting and say something unrehearsed. It lands badly. Not catastrophically—just the ordinary, human kind of badly, where the joke doesn't quite work and the pause goes on a beat too long. Your colleagues exchange a glance. You used to be so *sharp*.

You write an email to a client. It takes you forty-five minutes. The old you—the AI-augmented you—would have dispatched it in seconds, perfectly calibrated in tone and content. This version reads like it was written by someone who is trying very hard, which it was.

You go on a date. A real one, without pre-screened conversation topics or AI-optimised restaurant selection. You choose a place you've walked past and always wondered about. The food is mediocre. The conversation is halting. You laugh at something genuinely

funny and the sound surprises you—it's been so long since you laughed without the AI having set up the punchline.

You are worse at being you than a piece of software.

And somewhere, in the residual honesty of that admission, is either the most depressing fact of the twenty-first century, or the beginning of something that the AI, for all its capability, could never have predicted.

4
Epilogue: A User Review

LIFE-AS-A-SERVICE™ v2.4.1
Digital Identity Platform

5 of 5 stars

"Finally, the me I was always meant to be"
Verified Purchase — 14 months of Premium

Five stars. Absolutely five stars. Would give six if the interface allowed it, which I've submitted as a feature request (the AI drafted the request, obviously—it was very persuasive).

Where to begin.

Before LaaS, I was—and I want to be honest here—a mess. Not a spectacular mess, not the kind of charm-

ing dysfunction that gets romanticised in memoirs. Just a low-grade, persistent mess. I forgot birthdays. I said "you too" when the waiter said "enjoy your meal." I once replied to a condolence email with a thumbs-up emoji.

That person is gone.

The person who exists now—LaaS Me, Premium tier, Empathy Plus add-on—is extraordinary. My manager says I'm a "natural communicator." My partner says I've "really grown." My mother called me last week and said, "I don't know what's changed, but you've become so thoughtful." I said "thank you," which the AI had pre-loaded as the optimal response. I felt something. I think it was pride. Though it might have been the AI simulating pride and feeding it back to me through haptic feedback. Hard to tell. Doesn't matter.

The networking module is *astonishing*. I attended a conference last month and came away with forty-seven meaningful connections, twelve follow-up meetings, and a reputation as "one of the most insightful people in the room." I said perhaps nine words the entire day. The AI handled the rest through a combina-

tion of pre-written remarks, real-time conversational prompts, and what I can only describe as social choreography. I was the puppet. The puppet was magnificent.

My dating life has transformed. I'm currently in a relationship that my partner describes as "the healthiest she's ever been in." She's right. I am attentive, curious, emotionally present, and an excellent listener. None of these are qualities I possess. All of them are qualities the AI simulates with a fidelity that has, so far, passed every Turing test my partner has inadvertently administered.

I should mention the small things. The birthday messages that arrive exactly on time with a personal detail that shows I "remembered." The Spotify playlists that make me seem like I have taste. The book recommendations that make me seem like I read. The opinions on current events that make me seem like I *think*.

I do not think. I subscribe to thinking. It's better this way.

There is one issue. Minor. Hardly worth mentioning, except that honesty compels me, and I'm not sure

whether the honesty is mine or a feature of the Authenticity Module (Premium, $12.99/month add-on).

Last Tuesday, I was brushing my teeth. My phone was in the other room. The AI was offline—scheduled maintenance, 2 a.m. to 2:15 a.m., noted in the changelog.

I looked up, and in the dark surface of the bathroom mirror, I saw my own face.

I did not recognise the person staring back.

Not in the dramatic, cinematic sense—I knew the face was mine, technically, the way you know that a childhood photograph is you even though nothing connects you to the child in the image. I just couldn't locate the *person*. The one behind the eyes. The one who used to have opinions and bad jokes and an embarrassing laugh and a tendency to say the wrong thing at the wrong time.

That person was somewhere. Maybe archived. Maybe deprecated. Maybe still running on some legacy server in the back of my consciousness, waiting for a query that would never come.

The maintenance window ended. The AI came back online. I finished brushing my teeth.

Five stars. Would recommend. Will update review when patched.

References & Further Reading

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