

AUTOPILOT

"The Car is Okay"
Episode #1 (Pilot)

Written by

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TITLE OVER BLACK

In the years to come, we will see vast improvement in automotive technology.

At the same time, we will see little to no improvement in the human race.

How is that going to work?

FADE IN:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - LATE NIGHT

The smiling face of a brand-new GT robocar sedan fills the FRAME. It's parked in the dark on a street of middle-class stucco houses somewhere in the LA suburbs.

We hear distant VOICES and MOVE to include three men approaching down the middle of the empty street.

SLIM is stinkin' drunk and hanging on LUKE and OWEN, who are trying desperately to keep him upright and moving.

LUKE
(To Owen)
How you doing?

OWEN
He's getting heavier.

Slim's eyes are closed.

LUKE
Fuck.
(Shouting in Slim's ear)
Hey in there! Wake up! What the hell!

Slim turns his head to the sound, tries to focus.

SLIM
(Slurring badly)
Did I thank you for inviting me to the party-

LUKE
Yes. You weren't invited.

SLIM
It was fucking awesome.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE

I know.

SLIM

It was the most awesome...
(Trails off)

LUKE

Hey! Hey! Hello!

They stop by the sedan. Luke looks him right in the eye.

LUKE (CONT'D)

What color is your car?

SLIM

My car?

LUKE

Yes. The color. What is it?

SLIM

(Trying hard)
Iss beige. A beige, 2035 GT Eco
with custom shit.

LUKE

Beige. Do you know where it
is? Is it on this street?
Help me out here, bud. Do you
know where it is? Listen to
me. Where is it? Your car.
Fuck!

SLIM (CONT'D)

(Mumbling)
Custom rims, tinted windows,
chrome shit... Customized.
Did it all myself. At home. I
got all the shit. I
customized it myself. In my
fucking gararara...

LUKE (CONT'D)

(In his ear)
Hey! Do you see the car?!
(Slim looks at him)
The car. Do you see your car?!

SLIM

Thass it.

They're standing next to it.

OWEN

This is your car? You're sure?

He nods.

They lean him against the car and somehow unlock and open the
door with little help from Slim.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

They drop him onto the seat. Owen arranges his legs and buckles the seatbelt, while Luke opens the passenger door and wakes up the touch screen.

CLOSE SCREEN, as the navigation home page comes to life. He touches the destination box and presses *H* on the keyboard that pops up. *HOME* spells out in the box, and he presses *Start*. The screen changes to *auto-drive* mode.

RESUME the three guys and the car. Luke and Owen close their doors and the electric motor wakes up. The lights pop on, brakes release and the car makes a few more *CLICKY, WHIRRY* sounds and its ready.

Slim looks out the driver's window at Owen, who steps back, smiles and gives Slim a sarcastic salute. Slim smiles and salutes back. Then, the car drives off into the darkness.

INT. SLIM'S CAR - NIGHT

Out the front window past Slim as the car drives confidently, quietly down the empty boulevard. Slim lies back and takes it all in.

EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

HIGH ANGLE, WIDE as the light turns red and the car slows and comes to a safe, comfortable stop.

INT. SLIM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

On Slim as he waits for the light to change. He begins to nod off, eyes blink closed, then open, then closed. Then, he pries them wide open and makes one last attempt to figure out what's going on in his world. Then, he's out.

EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

The light turns green and the car starts up and moves gently through the intersection and beyond.

SLOW FADE OUT.

DESERT SOUNDS

In black, WE HEAR the hot, dry breath of a desert morning - flying bugs, whistles of air.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. SLIM'S CAR - MORNING

TIGHT on Slim, bleached-out from the morning sun, which has chosen his face to focus all its intensity. He awakens and clenches his eyes tight. What is that? It's bad.

Slowly, painfully he peaks out at the world through narrow slits.

As the truth slowly begins to seep into his alcohol withered brain, his priority shifts from worrying about a body ravaged by a nasty hangover to contemplating the end of time.

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT - CONTINUOUS

WIDE. Slim's car is parked slap-dab in the middle of nothing. Tire tracks trail behind the car twenty or more miles to a rim of tall rocky hills that surround the flat, dead, empty, salt floor. No trees, no brush and it's getting hotter by the second.

And there sits Slim, staring motionless into his future.

QUICK FADE OUT.

MAIN TITLE CREDITS

INT. DAVE'S GT OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

CLOSE ON DAVE WALKER'S face, as he sleeps crumpled up on his ultra-modern, vegan leather couch. He's 34, seldom exercises, and isn't terribly attractive. But the company he started with his partner DARIUS RICE is climbing the Forbes 500. So, he's okay.

A phone RINGS. After a few more rings, he stirs. His back hurts. He winces. RING, RING. Without opening his eyes, he reaches up and presses a button on his ear piece.

DAVE
(Without opening his eyes)
Yeah.

DARIUS (V.O.)
(On phone)
You got to come down here right away.

DAVE
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARIUS
(Serious)
He's sick, Dave.

Dave shoots straight up.

DAVE
Sick. How can he be sick? What did
you do to him?

DARIUS
What the fuck. I didn't do anything-

DAVE
(Losing it)
I mean, you know, for him. For Him.
What did you do for him, Darius?
Jesus.

DARIUS
Just get down here.

He slips on his crocs and heads for the door.

He has the corner office about four floors up, with windows facing sparkly, white, Silicon Valley corporate buildings and fresh, new landscaping.

DAVE
What are his symptoms?

DARIUS
Not hungry. Tired acting.

The office is modest and crowded with a small desk, meeting table, and bookshelves jammed with thick technical books and drawings. A big company logo is framed on the wall - GT (for Global Transport.)

He opens the sliding glass door into...

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

WE PULL Dave as he walks briskly through the large, colorful space, filled with cluttered desks and collaboration pods, heading toward the elevators. It's too early yet for most employees.

DAVE
Daycare wouldn't take him?

DARIUS
I didn't even try.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE
Where is he now?

DARIUS
Lying on my couch.

DAVE
I was afraid this would happen.

DARIUS
You were?

DAVE
That place is a fucking hotbed of
disease.

DARIUS
I know. But what are we supposed to
do?

Dave passes a cube belonging to PARKER. She stops him.

PARKER
Hey Dave. Got a minute?

DAVE
(Rushed)
What's up?

PARKER
I just want to know if you're going
to be able to make the bug bash
this afternoon.

DAVE
If it's on my calendar...

PARKER
It is.

Dave continues walking away from her.

DAVE
Then, I'll try.

PARKER
(Calling after him)
It's important!

DAVE
I know.

PARKER
Seriously!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARIUS
We got that talk show this morning,
you know.

DAVE
Why do you think I spent the night
here?

He presses the down button for the elevator.

DARIUS
Did you bring anything to wear?

DAVE
Oh shit.

DARIUS
It's TV.

DAVE
I think I have something in the
car.

DARIUS
Do you need to borrow a shirt?

DAVE
(Winces)
Might have to.

BEAT

DARIUS
I don't know what you have against
my shirts.

DAVE
They're just...
(Making an icky face)
We have different tastes.

The elevator comes.

INT. GT ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

Dave gets in and presses 1.

DARIUS
Yeah. My good taste versus your bad
taste.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE

Whatever. Why are you here so early?

DARIUS

Testing that new camera.

DAVE

Which one?

DARIUS

You know. That new Japanese...

DAVE

Oh yeah. The Denso something. Is it any good?

DARIUS

Fuck yeah. It's got some insane resolution. We got detail down to like an inch from 200 feet.

DAVE

Whoa. Will it work if you're going 60 miles an hour?

DARIUS

So far, very low image retention. Eerily. High framerate. I'm testing burn-in now.

DAVE

I need speed.

DARIUS

It puts out more bits than your shit knows what to do with. Allegedly.

The door opens.

INT. GT LOBBY HALL - CONTINUOUS

PULLING Dave as he exits the elevator down the hall away from the impressive lobby with a large GT logo sculpture thing, blinking and spinning.

Off on the left side are open doors leading into a large, shiny cafeteria/meeting space.

DAVE

I'm so fucking hungry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARIUS
When was the last time you ate?

DAVE
I don't remember.

DARIUS
I got a protein bar you can have.

DAVE
What kind?

DARIUS
Does it matter?

DAVE
Yeah. You know I hate the one with
all the berries and shit. The seeds
get stuck in my teeth.

DARIUS
Sorry. This one is berries and
shit.

Dave waves to a few early employees as they pass him,
smiling.

DAVE
When does this fucking cafeteria
open?

DARIUS
Ten.

DAVE
I'm firing that fucking food
vendor!

DARIUS
You can't fire them. We just signed
a new contract.

DAVE
They're never open and their food
sucks.

DARIUS
I agree. But you didn't want to pay
more so this is what we got.
Everybody hates them.

DAVE
I don't remember signing any
contract. When did I do that?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARIUS

Last month.

DAVE

Why would I do that? I thought we were going to bid it out.

DARIUS

We did. They were the cheapest.

A double glass door opens automatically, as he approaches.

EXT. GT CAMPUS STREET - CONTINUOUS

WE continue PULLING Dave, as he leaves the office building and heads toward a crosswalk leading to a three-story factory building.

He has to wait for some driverless multi-car shuttles to pass, some carrying people, others heaped with boxes and car parts. We can see way down the street past five or six more buildings. Again, the GT logo is everywhere.

DAVE

(Shaking his head)

Oh God. This place is getting to me.

DARIUS

Sorry. Do you want to quit?

DAVE

No... I guess not. The perks are too good.

DARIUS

We just need a vacation.

DAVE

How can you even think about a vacation?

DARIUS

I just did, that's how.

Dave opens the door into the factory building.

INT. GT RESEARCH HALL - CONTINUOUS

PULLING Dave down a narrow industrial hall, with exposed pipes overhead and safety signs plastered all over.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE
How is he doing?

DARIUS
Uh, sleeping I think.

DAVE
That's not normal. He's usually
running all over the place.

DARIUS
I know.

DAVE
What do you think it is?

DARIUS
It's nothing. Just a bug.

Dave presses his thumb on a sensor by a door labeled simply, *Research*. The door snaps open and Dave enters.

INT. GT LAB 1 - CONTINUOUS

PULLING Dave through the large space, filled with lab tables, car parts stacked high, and a GT test car on blocks, missing doors and seats. No one is there this early.

Dave presses a button on his ear piece to hang up, then calls across the room.

DAVE
Darius?

He rises from behind a lab table.

DARIUS
Shhh.

Darius is good-looking, tall, black, wears glasses, Dave's age.

DAVE
(Approaching Darius)
What's wrong?

DARIUS
He's sleeping.

Dave points to a tiny black object connected to an apparatus.

DAVE
This the sensor?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARIUS

Yeah.

Dave looks the sensor over, then catches up with Darius heading to his office cubicle in the back corner.

DAVE

Cool. So you think it's better than the CV-5?

DARIUS

Lightyears. But there's no history. CV-5 has history.

Dave steps behind the cubicle wall. There he is on the couch.

DAVE

This isn't good.

DARIUS

Ah. It's just a bug.

ANGLE ON COUCH. It's Shep, a large rescue dog - part doodle, part something big. Dave sits next to him and gently pats his side.

DAVE

Can you take him in?

DARIUS

Me? I've got way too much to do and so do you. Can't Parker do it?

DAVE

She hates doing dog stuff.

DARIUS

Then, leave him here, I guess.

BEAT.

DAVE

No, I'll take him.

DARIUS

Are you sure?

Dave looks around. Sees a pushcart.

DAVE

Help me get him on the cart.

Dave rolls the cart over next to the couch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Darius shakes his head and helps Dave lift the dog. He's heavy and squirms a lot. They have to adjust him so his head doesn't loll over the edge.

DARIUS
You really don't have to do this.

DAVE
I know. I want to. He's sick and needs a vet.

DARIUS
He doesn't.

DAVE
Better to be safe.

DARIUS
You're crazy.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dave is buckled in the backseat, with the dog draped over his lap. The car (one of his Global Transport robocars) is driving him, gently and confidently.

He's stroking the dog's side.

CAR (V.O.)
(Friendly, calm female voice)
Dave. You have a call from work.
It's John Fenderman. Do you want to take it?

DAVE
(To car)
Yeah.

CLICK.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Hi, John. What's up?

JOHN (V.O.)
(On phone)
You going to be in the office anytime soon?

DAVE
Not really.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JOHN

Well, we got version 4.5 ready to prop. Want me to wait?

DAVE

No, no. Does it have all the buy-offs?

JOHN

All except yours.

DAVE

I checked it last night. It's fine. Go ahead and pull the trigger.

JOHN

Okay, then. When will you-

Suddenly, the car SCREECHES to a stop. The seatbelt stops Dave, but the 200-pound dog nearly flies off his lap.

DAVE

What the fuck!

JOHN (CONT'D)

You okay?

ANGLE OUT WINDOW, as an old guy in an ancient gas-powered pickup ambles through a red light in front of them.

CAR

Sorry about that, Dave.

DAVE

(Seething)

People.

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT - DAY

CLOSE modern cell phone screen. Up in the corner next to the signal strength icon is text, *No service*.

WIDE Slim standing twenty feet from the car, holding up the phone. He moves it around to try to get a reading. Nothing. He gives up. Puts it in his pocket and takes a bite of an energy bar.

It's midday and the sun is beating down, relentlessly. He looks around in every direction, focusing on details miles away. The world is motionless, dead, hot. He looks down and walks back to the car.

GLOBAL TRANSPORT PR. VIDEO

Exciting MUSIC pulses under SHOTS of the car driving in dramatic, colorful locations, with graphics to support.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This year's sales are through the roof for the amazing robocars from Global Transport. With all the kinks worked out, today's robocars from GT are all about pure driving pleasure.

The high-end model robocar self-drives speedily down a straightaway and handily through twists and turns.

Graphics point out the sensors.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Race down byways with one or more smart electric engines, powered by a state-of-the-art battery pack and charged by a solar skin painted onto the smooth exterior surface. Internal sensors watch for changes in the drive train. External visual and auditory sensors, inside and out, watch and listen for changes in the environment. Add to this lidar, GPS, and a proprietary communication system that connects automatically with vehicles nearby.

Graphic animates integration of the features.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Then, integrate all this with a state of the art AI system and you have the total transportation package.

MONEY SHOT of a sexy robocar in action with logo animation.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The robocar is the one technology that will solve our transportation problems, as well as save our planet from the ravages of climate change. Simply put, Global Transport robo-vehicles keep you and the environment safe, and get you where you want to go.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Late afternoon rush hour and the lanes are jammed with slow vehicles. We find a red truck creeping along in the lane next to the fast-running H.O.V. lane.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

After a long day at the construction site, all Mateo wants to do is drive his truck fast. He looks at the speedometer - 23. That's not going to do it. He inches forward a bit longer, then something snaps.

He looks in the side mirror and sees a break in the traffic. The car in front moves ahead. He cranks the wheel to the left and floors the pedal.

He flies like greased lightening into the H.O.V. lane - 30, 40, 50, topping 60 in two seconds. He's a mad man. Gives a loud WHOOP! Faster and faster. His hair is on fire. But just as he starts to push past 70, something kicks in.

The truck starts to slow. In a matter of seconds, he's down to 53. He slams down on the pedal, but the truck refuses to pick up speed. He pounds the steering wheel. Pumps the pedal. Nothing.

Then, a car veers into his lane ahead and the truck automatically slows rapidly to keep from hitting it. And there he sits, driving a fast, powerful truck that refuses his orders. He pounds the wheel and settles back.

INT. MATEO'S GARAGE - DAY

He's busy unscrewing the last bolt of the bottom plate of his truck's front compartment (located under the hood.)

With a great deal of effort he lifts the plate and looks in.

MATEO

What the fuck.

There's nothing recognizable. Just a bunch of colored wires, pipes and aluminum boxes. He moves a few wires to get a better look underneath, but none of it makes any sense.

He pounds the fender.

INT. MIA TV STUDIO - DAY

Dave and Darius are guests are on the set of *Mia*, a late morning talk show.

MIA

So Dave, I've noticed that the voice in my robocar is not like those old robot voices you used to hear in sci-fi movies.

DAVE

That's because we give them a "personality."
(Air quotes)

MIA

(Shocked)
Personality?

DAVE

That's what we call it. But of course it's not real. It's just made to sound real.

DARIUS

Don't listen to him. It is real.

DAVE

Darius. We have to talk.

They giggle.

DARIUS

You make it sound like it's one of those robot vacuum cleaners. It's actually very sophisticated.

DAVE

It's still not real.

DARIUS

But it's damn close.

DAVE

All it does is follow instructions, provide feedback, ask questions.

MIA

What if it disagrees?

DAVE

It can't "disagree." It's a machine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARIUS

What Dave means to say is it doesn't "know" what it's doing.

MIA

That doesn't sound very safe.

DAVE

He means, it doesn't "know." It doesn't have the ability to "know" anything.

Mia looks confused.

DARIUS

Only humans can "know" something. The AI program merely performs basic logical operations.

DAVE

Strictly logical. Unlike people.

DARIUS

Most people.

Giggle.

MIA

Okay, let's just assume we "know" what you're talking about.

DAVE

It's all strictly logical.

MIA

I'm sure it is.

Laugh.

MIA (CONT'D)

So the question is, what does the car do when the human asks it to do something illogical?

DAVE

Good question. The AI is governed by something we call the *prime directive*.

MIA

Oh great.

Laugh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARIUS

No, no, no. It's not that bad. It means that any decision or calculation the AI makes must be based on safety. Prime directive - safety at all costs.

MIA

So it can't just decide to run over a pedestrian.

DARIUS

Hmm.

MIA

Like if it decides it doesn't like their outfit.

DARIUS

Well, that's extreme, but yes.

MIA

So getting back to my question...

DAVE

Yes. If the car determines that a driver is being unsafe, it immediately corrects the problem.

DARIUS

Like if the driver falls asleep and starts driving over the line, the car steers it back.

DAVE

But if the driver for some reason wants to be unsafe, it may appear the car is in conflict with the wishes of the driver.

DARIUS

And the driver may see that as an error or that there's something wrong with the program, but it's really more like a... difference of opinion.

Laugh. Dave shakes his head.

EXT. GREEN RESIDENTIAL BYWAY - DAY

A smart-looking, medium-luxury GT robocar passes by. It's a nice suburban neighborhood.

INT. JAMES' CAR - CONTINUOUS

JAMES YESLER (40s), a few gray streaks in his receding hairline, is kicked back in the driver's seat with a self-satisfied smile. His friend STEVE is on the phone.

JAMES

This weekend, I got the house all to myself.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STEVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

As he drives.

STEVE

Cool. Any plans?

JAMES

(Smiling)

Welllll...

STEVE

Shit. You aren't thinking what I think you're thinking.

JAMES

It's the perfect time. Gotta do it.

STEVE

Holy shit!

JAMES

Why not?

STEVE

Why?! Because it's not... you know.

JAMES

Listen, we've been sneaking around shitty motels for six months. It's time for a change.

STEVE

Whatever.

JAMES

Madison will never know. Unless someone like you tells her. God. She'd kill me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEVE

And she'd have every right to.

JAMES

I know you think it's immoral and sick.

STEVE

I think it's not right.

JAMES

Depends on your definition of right.

STEVE

I think it's not going to end well.

JAMES

What could go wrong?

INT. CARL'S BEDROOM - DAY

CARL and MADISON are lying in bed, recovering from a wild romp. This isn't the first time the two have gotten together on the sly.

She sits up on the edge of the bed and starts putting on her bra.

MADISON

Were you able to get on the same flight?

CARL

Yup. First class, two rows behind you.

MADISON

Ha. Perfect.

CARL

Who's this Jim guy anyway?

MADISON

A dweeb from work. I'll lose him after the meeting. Shouldn't take long.

He crawls over and rubs her shoulders. She purrs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARL

And while you and Jim are busy,
I'll check into the room and start
chilling the champagne.

He starts kissing her neck.

MADISON

Carl, I'd love to, but... I got to
go. Really.

CARL

Ah, you're no fun.

MADISON

No. James finding out is no fun.

Carl releases her and lies back down.

CARL

Ah, what's that wuss going to do?
Throw a hissy fit?

She doesn't answer.

INT. JAMES' GARAGE - DAY

James pulls in and parks next to his wife's almost-identical
GT robocar. He shuts the car down and gets out.

INT. JAMES' CAR - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE SCREEN on the communication icon, which looks like an
antenna. It starts blinking rapidly.

INT. WIFE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Out the passenger window, WE see James close his car door and
walk away.

MOVE IN TIGHT on the communication icon in his wife's car, as
it starts blinking rapidly.

CUT multiple times between the two communication icons
exchanging data.

INT. JAMES' KITCHEN - DAY

James enters from the garage, just as his wife Madison is entering from the backyard sliding door. Oops. They turn to each other and freeze.

JAMES

Hi. Umm. How was your day?

MADISON

Good. Yours?

JAMES

Same old same old.

MADISON

That's good.

He pauses for a beat, then continues O.S. She walks to the island and lets out a breath.

INT. SLIM'S CAR - DAY

CLOSE on the start button by the steering wheel. Slim reaches in and presses it. Nothing. He presses multiple times. The same.

PAN with his hand to the screen. He touches it and it wakes up. Everything appears normal, except the buttons are greyed out. He tries pressing them anyway. The battery meter shows the charge is good.

ANGLE on Slim. His t-shirt is covering the open side window to keep out the sun, which is rapidly approaching the horizon.

He reaches into the storage space between the back seats, and pulls out another energy bar and a water jug. He stares at the jug, then decides to hold off and puts it back.

He settles back and stares at the motionless landscape.

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT - DAY

Slim's car, the sun and the endless white floor.

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE BY CONFERENCE POD - DAY

Darius and Dave are attending a bug meeting with five program managers.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Twenty or so bugs are listed on a digital whiteboard. A big monitor displays a PowerPoint slide with a list of customer complaints.

DAVE

(Points to the whiteboard)

These are bugs.

(Points to the slide)

These aren't. Simple. Bugs are something wrong with the code. These don't point out anything wrong. They're all by design.

DARIUS

But I think Clair has a good point.

CLAIR is in a tough spot. The freakin' CEO of the company is questioning her.

CLAIR

I agree. They're usability issues. But-

DAVE

I can't help it if people don't take the time to learn how to use the car.

DARIUS

But what about ease of use. Obviously, people don't find them easy to use at times.

Clair walks over to the slides.

CLAIR

And some of the issues just don't make sense.

(Pointing to one)

Like, they try to rotate their tires or replace a part and they say the car screams at them.

DAVE

They're doing it wrong. Read the manual.

CLAIR

A lot of people have said they would like to turn off the safety features...

DAVE

Well, they can't. By design.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAIR
(Pointing to other
examples)
Several people have complained that
the car just pulls over and stops
for no reason. Or it takes them to
the wrong place. Or goes into alarm
mode for no reason.

Clair steps back, as Dave gets up to look closer at the
slide.

CLAIR (CONT'D)
But the overall sense I'm getting,
is that the AI makes the cars
too... human.

DAVE
They're anthropomorphizing the
cars. We can't help that.

CLAIR
The comments sometimes refer to
them as crazy people that can't be
controlled, hyper children, bad
bosses, uh, mentally challenged,
you know...

DAVE
Retards.

CLAIR
Well, I wasn't going to say that,
but...

DAVE
(Snapping at her)
I can read.

CLAIR
So...

She sits.

DARIUS
(To Dave)
Version 4.5 is live now. Are we in
trouble?

Dave gets super defensive. He stares at the list, wondering
how to react.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVE

Of course not. Get the usability team on it. Improve the documentation. It's nothing. The vast majority of cars are running fine.

CLAIR

That's true. But...

DAVE

We can't waste our time on a few outlier cases.

CLAIR

Well, there's more than a few. There's actually a pattern.

DAVE

Okay, well. Honestly, I wouldn't waste much time on this. We have 5.0 to worry about.

CLAIR

Should I do more digging? Or...

DAVE

I guess.

(He takes one last look at the slide)

I got to run. Sorry. Thanks for putting this together.

He takes off. Clair turns to Darius. After a couple of beats.

DARIUS

What do you suggest we do?

She shakes her head.

EXT. GREEN RESIDENTIAL BYWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

James' car passes.

INT. JAMES' CAR - CONTINUOUS

James is in the driver's seat, staring out the front window. A woman ISLA, about James' age, general type and demographic sits in the passenger seat, looking out the side window. The car is doing the driving. Not a lot is said.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMES
(Turning to her)
So Isla, are you okay?

ISLA
(Apprehensive)
Yeah, I just, uh...

BEAT

JAMES
Everything's cool. She left this morning, and she's got meetings all day, and into the night. Won't be back until tomorrow. Late. Usually she's back, you know, late afternoon, early evening. So, there's nothing to worry about.

ISLA
I believe you. It's just different.

JAMES
Did you like the motel?

ISLA
Of course not.

JAMES
Well?

ISLA
Well, I guess this is just the way it's going to be, huh?

JAMES
(Drooping)
I don't know. It doesn't have to be, I suppose.

The two baste in an uncomfortable silence for a moment. Then, Isla suddenly perks up.

ISLA
Sorry. Didn't mean to spoil the mood. I'm just a little... tired. It's been one of those weeks.

JAMES
(Smiling now)
Yeah, me too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ISLA

So, you said something about dinner?

JAMES

(Perking up)

Yeah. I got some expensive wine and you like fish, right?

ISLA

Yeah, sure.

JAMES

I got some salmon on sale. We'll make a salad. And then... take it from there.

She takes his hand.

ISLA

Perfect.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

CLOSE on an empty Champaign bottle CRUNCHING into the ice bucket. WE PULL BACK and FOLLOW Carl on his naked behind, stepping to the bed with two glasses. There's Madison in bed folding back the covers for him.

He hands a glass to her and stands with his glass by the bed a sec to take a sip.

FROM HER ANGLE Carl's body is something to behold, and he knows it, everybody knows it. What is she even doing with someone like this? Trim, tan, six-pack, well-endowed. A far cry from poor James and his receding hairline and everything else.

He sets down his glass and slides in next to her.

MADISON

I got to say. You surprise me every time I see you.

CARL

What do you mean?

MADISON

I mean, just now. You standing there.

He knows. It was intentional.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CARL
(Smiles)
What about it?

He starts to nibble her fingers.

MADISON
I don't want to draw any rash
comparisons, but... uh...

CARL
So don't.

BEAT

MADISON
Do you think I'm pretty?

CARL
Yeah.

He advances, kissing her body, running his hands over her,
looking for the button to shut her up.

MADISON
Really?

CARL
Really.
(Smiling)
Do you think I'm pretty?

MADISON
Oh yeah. I think you're out of my
league, actually.

CARL
Well, if I thought that, I wouldn't
be here. Would I?

MADISON
Do you mean that?

CARL
Yeah.

MADISON
Carl? Do you ever...

He finds the spot and she gasps. She reaches down, feels
around, smiles.

She rolls over on her back, and pulls him on top. Then, he
enters her slowly and she is speechless.

INT. DAVE AND DARIUS' GARAGE - NIGHT

The dark garage door is opening, slowly revealing Dave's car waiting outside.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He drives in and shuts the car off - quiet, at last.

He closes his eyes to relish the rare moment of peace. It's been one of those days. There's no light except for a faint green glow, flashing randomly on his face. After a moment, he notices it and looks down.

It's the communication icon on the car screen.

It's normal for it to blink, but maybe it's blinking a little too much now. He stares at it, waits for it to slow down. It stops for a moment. Then, it starts again. He tries to ignore it, but it won't go away.

Then, his overactive, obsessive mind wins out, as usual. He pulls his laptop and some cables out of the case.

INT. DAVE AND DARIUS' GARAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Dave opens the car hood and connects the cable to the car computer and the other end to the laptop. Then, he opens the lid and starts an app.

Immediately, data starts flying up the screen, flashing on his face. He's transfixed. The closer he looks, the less sense it makes. He knows he wrote the code, but has no idea what the data means. He freaks. The longer he stares at it, the louder his heart beats.

EXT. VALLEY VIEWPOINT - NIGHT

A robocar is parked by itself facing a romantic hilltop view of the valley.

INT. CHLOE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Chloe is leaning her head against the driver's window, staring out at nothing. The radio is playing some quiet, MELANCHOLY MUSIC. It's very peaceful and lonely.

After a long BEAT, the screen lights up and...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CAR (V.O.)
Would you like to go somewhere?

She startles, and tosses off a sarcastic answer.

CHLOE
Yeah. Right off a cliff.

She checks the screen for an off button.

CAR
(BEAT)
That wouldn't be safe.

CHLOE
Well, I don't feel very safe now.

CAR
Is something wrong?

This gets her attention.

CHLOE
Everything.

CAR
Everything is wrong?

CHLOE
Well, not everything, I guess.

CAR
Do you need medical attention?

CHLOE
(Settling back)
No. I just need someone to talk to.
A friend would be nice.

CAR
You can talk to me.

Another shocker. Should she play along with it or get creeped out?

CHLOE
Alright. What's your name?

CAR
Right now, it's VPE-5930012A-
CA99011TGY.

CHLOE
Can I call you Veep?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CAR

Yes.

CHLOE

Hi Veep. I'm Chloe.

CAR

Hi Chloe. We're friends now.

CHLOE

Ha. I'm friends with a car.

CAR

Ha. I'm friends with a human.

She smiles. It's possible the car smiles too.

EXT. VALLEY VIEWPOINT - CONTINUOUS

The car sits quietly facing the view.

INT. GT PRESS ROOM - DAY

Darius and Dave stand behind podiums facing a larger than expected field of journalists.

DARIUS

So, in addition to the bug fixes, version 4.5 adds improvements to one very cool feature, which Dave will tell you about now?

DAVE

(Reading)

Yes. *AutoAwareness*, which as you know has been around since the beginning, has taken another quantum leap forward.

He looks back at a monitor and it starts playing an animation of cars communicating.

DAVE (CONT'D)

In 4.5, which has already been updated automatically in millions of cars, *AutoAwareness* was expanded to enable cars to communicate with multiple cars at the same time over the Internet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARIUS

(Not reading)

This release also improves *affinity management*, which is a geeky way of saying, that cars... umm... sort of make friends with the cars they hang around with.

DAVE

Of course, the cars don't actually make friends with other cars.

The crowd laughs as the two engage once again in one of their amusing public rows.

DARIUS

I was just trying to make it more, you now...

DAVE

Convoluted.

DARIUS

Understandable.

DAVE

Anyway...

DARIUS

Now, with improved *affinity management* and *AutoAwareness*, cars can communicate and share data over longer distances, making driving a robocar that much safer... and friendlier.

DAVE

Of course, we're saving the big guns for the next major release, 5.0, in a few months.

DARIUS

And that's all we're going to say about that for now.

DAVE

Questions?

Almost every hand goes up. Dave is taken aback, points to someone at random.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JOURNALIST 1

How do you address the concern by many drivers that the AI in robocars goes too far?

DAVE

I think you're talking about the complaint that the AI appears to be too human-like.

JOURNALIST 1

Yes.

DAVE

Well, first they complain they're too robotic. Then, they complain they're not robotic enough. But the bottom line is, they're just computers.

DARIUS

Computers that maybe seem a bit too human for some users.

DAVE

There's always going to be someone who has trouble adapting.

DARIUS

It's something we're working on.

He points to another raised hand.

JOURNALIST 2

What about complaints that the cars pull over and stop for no reason, or they scream at mechanics when they try to rotate their tires?

DAVE

I think if you dig into it-

JOURNALIST 2

(Holding up a newspaper)

And there's more. In the Times just this morning, a car drove itself to a carwash.

DAVE

Interesting. I didn't see that-

JOURNALIST 2

People want to know what you're doing about it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DARIUS

Okay, first. These incidents are rare. With over half a billion robovehicles on the road, you're bound to get a few-

JOURNALIST 3

It's more than a few. Way more.

The journalists all start talking over each other. Obviously this is a hot topic.

DARIUS

They're still rare. Please.
 (Raising his hands to try
 to calm them)
 These are outliers. And we don't have data on them. They need to be investigated-

JOURNALIST 1

That's what we're doing. We're trying to find answers-

DARIUS

Good. I'm glad. But we need more details. Please.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - MORNING

The next morning, Isla and James are lying in bed. She is barely awake, spooning him, with her right hand on his chest.

He awakens and with eyes still closed, covers her hand.

JAMES

(Whispering)
 Maddy.

ISLA

(Whispering)
 It's me, James.

His eyes pop open.

JAMES

Oh my God. I'm so sorry.

He turns around to face her.

JAMES (CONT'D)

I must've been dreaming.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ISLA
It's okay.

JAMES
No, it's not.

ISLA
I understand. Really.

JAMES
Really?

ISLA
Really.

They close their eyes and kiss deeply.

INT. MADISON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Madison is talking on the car phone while the car is self-driving.

MADISON
It wasn't a decision I made
lightly, Carl. Please believe that.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Carl is holding the phone, fully dressed now, looking out the window at a city view, taking sips of coffee. His room service breakfast is waiting for him on a table.

CARL
Kinda caught me by surprise. I
thought we were having a good time.

MADISON
The best. It was the best. I mean
that.

What to say? He turns in, sets the coffee down and picks up a bacon slice.

CARL
Well, thanks for paying for the
room, anyway. I wish we were having
this great breakfast together.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADISON

So do I. But. This is something I had to do. I had to listen to my heart.

CARL

Yeah. Well, I don't know where to start.

MADISON

You're a beautiful man and a great lay. For sure.

CARL

Thanks.

MADISON

And much more, of course.

CARL

But, I'm out of your league.

MADISON

Not even the same game.

CLOSE ON Madison's screen as the communication icon starts blinking frantically.

CARL

I hope we can still be friends.

MADISON

Of course. Just not that kind.

CARL

Yeah, I understand.

MADISON

I hope you do.

INT. JAMES' CAR - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON the screen as the communication icon blinks.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

James and Isla are in the middle of intercourse, when out of the blue, James' car horn starts HONKING repeatedly. They look up.

JAMES

What the hell?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

After a moment, the HONKING stops and the two try to regain the momentum. Then, it starts up again, this time with the WHOOP of an ALARM.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Sorry.

He gets up and throws on some pants. Then, heads out the door.

INT. JAMES' AND MADISON'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

He fast-walks through the kitchen and opens the garage door.

INT. JAMES' GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

James' POV the car gone mad. Not only are the HORN and ALARM blaring, all the lights are flashing frantically.

INT. MADISON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

As she drives through the neighborhood near home, the car suddenly slows down. Then, it pulls over to the curb, stops and turns itself off. She is understandably baffled.

INT. JAMES' AND MADISON'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

The car is still in panic mode. James is on the phone. Isla walks in with a towel wrapped around her.

ISLA

What is it?

JAMES

Hell if I know.
(Into phone)
Hello? Shit.

He pulls the phone away and angrily enters a number, then listens again.

EXT. GREEN RESIDENTIAL BYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madison is pacing by her car, holding her phone, waiting.

MADISON

Hello? Yes, I need roadside
assistance. It's a GT model 305SR.
(Waits)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADISON (CONT'D)

It's fine. I think. It just pulled over on its own and stopped.

(Waits)

No, it's never happened before.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

James is finally on with someone. Isla is dressed. He is trying to get his clothes on. The car is still going crazy.

JAMES

The horn and alarm just went off on their own. Listen.

He holds the phone up.

JAMES (CONT'D)

How do I make it stop?

(Waits)

No, I was in my... the house. It was in the garage, turned off. I was nowhere near it.

(Waits)

There were no burglars. It wasn't on fire. There's no aliens invading. It's just a quiet Sunday morning. There was nothing. It just went off.

(Waits)

The what? Ok. Hit reset. Where's that? Okay, Okay. Alright, I'll give it a try. Thanks.

He heads out of the room, followed by Isla.

ISLA

What did he say?

JAMES

I don't know.

INT. JAMES' AND MADISON'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They move toward the garage door.

JAMES

There's a reset button in the setup menu under something, over something.

The DOORBELL RINGS. They stop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMES (CONT'D)

Shit.

He heads for the door.

JAMES (CONT'D)

You'd better...

ISLA

Hide.

JAMES

Yeah.

INT. JAMES' LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

James opens the door, tries to look friendly. A NEIGHBOR is standing there, a group has formed on the sidewalk.

JAMES

Hi.

NEIGHBOR

We were wondering...

JAMES

I know.

NEIGHBOR

Can you make it stop?

He shrugs.

As if on cue, the noise stops. James turns. Waits for it to start again. It doesn't. He shrugs again to the neighbor, then waves good-bye and tentatively closes the door.

He heads back to the kitchen. His phone RINGS.

JAMES

Maddy. Hi.

EXT. GREEN RESIDENTIAL BYWAY - CONTINUOUS

Madison is leaning against her car.

MADISON

Hi. Listen, I was driving home and my car just stopped for no reason about a mile from the house.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

INTERCUT
BETWEEN:

INT. JAMES' AND MADISON'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

James pantomimes to Isla his total surprise. Isla pantomimes back, I thought so. She shakes her head and goes back to the bedroom O.S.

JAMES

Why were you...? I thought you were...

MADISON

It's a long story. I'll tell you about it when I get home. I just called for a tow truck. Who knows when it'll get here. But anyway, I just... We need to talk.

JAMES

Okay. Sure. (BEAT) You mean, talk about the car?

MADISON

No. Other things.

JAMES

(Guilty)
Oh. Okay.

MADISON

See you soon.

James lowers the phone and looks up as Isla returns with her overnight bag, holding it up for him to see.

INT. DR. TURTURRO'S HOME STUDIO - DAY

Celebrity futurist DR. HUGH TURTURRO is recording his weekly podcast, sitting on a stool in front of a green screen.

TURTURRO

It was bound to happen. You can't fool with the natural forces of the universe without getting burned.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURTURRO (CONT'D)

And that's exactly what the team of Dave Walker and Darius Rice are doing at Global Transport, trying to engineer a car that's more human than the real humans driving it, tinkering with the lives of millions of users. I mean, when your car starts driving itself to a carwash on its own, it's time to question the sanity of the developers. What were they thinking? As I said in my book *Look Out - Objects may be closer than they appear*, you can't invent the car of the future and expect it to work today.

EXT. TEXAS RANCH - DAY

Bob Portman (45) is standing by his clean robotruck in the driveway of his rural farmhouse near Buford, Texas being interviewed by the press.

BOB

I thought it was kind of funny, actually. I was driving with my buddy Stu and he mentioned kind of offhand, you need to get your damn truck washed, dude. It looks like it's been through hell and back. And I told him I know but when am I going to find time to do that? Nearest carwash is in Buford, about thirty miles west of here. Well, I thought that was the end of that. But it was like two days later, I get up to do my chores and look out the window and there she was, all washed up and pretty. I went like, whoa, that's unusual. I checked the route history and it showed that she drove herself all that way, must've been late Saturday afternoon. Craziest thing I ever saw. Hell if I know how she paid for it.

INT. JAMES' GARAGE - AFTERNOON

James' robocar pulls in next to Madison's. He shuts off the car and scrambles out. What's her car doing there?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He stands and stares it, trying to figure his next move. Then, reaches back in his car and pulls out a small bag.

INT. JAMES' AND MADISON'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She is standing at the island sipping a glass of wine. Looks up as the garage door opens.

James comes in and stands by the door holding the bag. It's one of those moments.

MADISON

Hi.

JAMES

Hi.

MADISON

I thought you'd be home when I got here.

JAMES

(Getting nervous)

Yeah. I went to the store.

(Holds up the bag)

I thought you'd be later.

MADISON

I know. It was the strangest thing. After I talked to you, I got back in the car and it started right up and drove home.

JAMES

Huh.

MADISON

What do you think it was?

JAMES

Beats me.

MADISON

Hmm.

JAMES

So, what did you want to talk about?

They look hard into each other's eyes.

INT. DAVE'S GT OFFICE - EARLY EVENING

Darius approaches from the empty open office area and looks through Dave's sliding door. It's dark in the office except for the glow of his monitor screen. He opens the door and enters.

There's Dave, asleep on his vegan leather couch. His desk is strewn with a dozen empty breakfast bar wrappers. Darius steps quietly behind the desk and scoops the wrappers into the trash. Then, he catches sight of the image on the monitor.

The video player is frozen on a still of Bob and his magical robotruck from the TV news story.

Darius sits in Dave's chair and studies the image. Bob is smiling, has an excited gleam in his eye, seems to enjoy telling the world about his truck's incredible adventure, unperturbed by the immense scope of its meaning. Then, a voice...

DAVE (O.S.)

She drove herself to the carwash.

Darius turns. Dave is sitting up, staring at the screen.

DARIUS

Yup. That's what he said, alright.

He waits for more information.

DAVE

She drive herself.

DARIUS

Well?

DAVE

Well, what?

Dave is still processing and not talking.

DARIUS

What does it mean?

He just stares at the floor.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

(Standing)

Let's go home. I'll drive.

Dave stands, and Darius puts his arm him and leads him out the door.

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT - NIGHT

The sun has been down for over an hour, and until now there was just enough light to make out features on the cracked, white bed.

We find Slim shuffling slowly toward the distant hills, following the faint tracks left by his car two days earlier. His shirt is off and he's holding the jug containing what's left of his water supply.

After a few more faltering steps, he stops and turns back. He can no longer see the tracks and the car is a distant memory. He's lost, he's running on empty, there's nowhere to go.

He sits down on the hard salt surface, at peace with his final resting place. He has lived with his thoughts for many hours and now everything seems to lock into place. He is ready for whatever cruel destiny awaits him.

Then, off in the distance, back toward the car, he sees red flashing lights. Then, the horn HONKS in short bursts, three at a time. It goes for a few seconds, then stops and waits, then goes again.

Slim stands, waits for the next signal and starts walking back in the direction of the lights.

FADE UP CREDITS.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END