

AUTOPILOT

"What the Car Thinks"

Episode #2

Written by

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TEASER

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT - SUNRISE

Slim is asleep in his car, which is parked in the same place, facing the same dry, motionless landscape.

INT. SLIM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE SLIM, as a beam of bright sun lands on his face. His eyes pop open. Unlike the first time he awoke here, he is alert and motivated. He's had plenty of time to think. He has a plan, he's positive. He's going to start early and get as far as he can and hope for the best.

He pulls out the water jug and shakes it - about half full. It'll have to do. He takes a small sip. Then, he reaches back and grabs an energy bar from the console, then one more, the last one. He stuffs them in his pocket.

Then, just as he's about to open the door, all the locks snap shut, the screen lights up and the car motor starts. After all the usual CLICKING and WHIRRING, the car VOICE comes on...

CAR (V.O.)

Please, buckle your seatbelt.

Slim freezes, looks around. The car waits. He buckles the belt. Then, the car starts to move.

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT - CONTINUOUS

It backs up at a 90-degree angle, stops, shifts to drive, and then turns and heads back in the direction it came from.

WE WATCH as it follows the tracks back toward the distant mountains.

FADE OUT.

END TEASER

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ACT ONE

INT. DAVE'S AND DARIUS' HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Dave is moving back and forth, making a lot of racket, furiously cutting up ingredients on the kitchen island, as Darius kicks back with a beer and football.

This is the casual area of their insanely-spacious mansion. Out the second-floor windows, we have a panoramic view of acres of manicured drought-tolerant plants.

DARIUS

(Upset)

What are you doing, anyway?

DAVE

(Tense)

What do you think?

DARIUS

You're going to drop dead from a heart attack.

DAVE

Do you want pizza or not?

DARIUS

I don't care. Relax. Come here. Sit down.

Dave reluctantly drops the neurotic thing he's working on and walks over to Darius and sits on his side of their tricked-out two-person recliner.

DAVE

You know, I didn't like the vet's tone of voice.

DARIUS

Yeah?

DAVE

He's happy to take our money but I really don't think he gives a shit about our dog. All I did was ask how he was and he dismissed me. Oh he's fine. Don't worry. It's just a bug. Probably. Go away. Slam!

DARIUS

Did he really slam the phone?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE

He did.

DARIUS

Really?

DAVE

I definitely heard a loud click. He couldn't get rid of me fast enough.

Darius grabs his hand.

DARIUS

Relax.

DAVE

Now you're dismissing me.

DARIUS

I'm trying to dismiss your neurosis for just a moment. One moment. We just need a little respite, a little quiet time.

DAVE

Fuck you.

DARIUS

You got to let go. Okay? It's making me crazy. It's very counter-productive.

He rubs Dave's hand to calm him.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Just relax. For just a minute.

Dave stares at football for a second and shakes his head.

DAVE

I hate football.

Darius releases his hand and he flies back to the pizza project.

DARIUS

Don't forget my sausage.

DAVE

It's all gone.

DARIUS

What? I told Tia to get more.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVE
You don't need sausage.

DARIUS
(Turning to Dave)
But I want it.

DAVE
Your cholesterol's too high.

DARIUS
I don't care.

DAVE
African Americans are more
susceptible to heart disease. You
should know that.

DARIUS
Fuck you. I want my sausage.

DAVE
It's all gone.

DARIUS
Did you?

DAVE
Yes.

Darius stands and faces him.

DARIUS
You told her to go against my
wishes?

DAVE
Yup.

DARIUS
Okay. That pisses me off.

He storms into the kitchen. Dave grabs a big knife. Now it's
a game.

DAVE
Hold on, cowboy.

DARIUS
(Raising his hands)
Put it down.

DAVE
You're threatening me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DARIUS

(Holding it in)

Okay. I... I appreciate that you seem to care about my cholesterol level. Really, I do.

(Puts on a fake black accent)

But as a African American I don't like some puny little white cracker boy telling me I can't eat my sausage. That's a big part of my culture and that's discrimination. Plain and simple.

DAVE

(Melting)

Oh. I love it when you call me a cracker boy.

DARIUS

Cracker boy.

Darius grabs the knife and sets it down, then they embrace.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

The company has gotten to us. It's not good.

DAVE

They don't understand.

DARIUS

They don't have to. It's our job to understand them.

DAVE

You're right, of course.

A short kiss. Darius helps him.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I can't get that image out of my head.

DARIUS

What? The carwash?

DAVE

How did it get in without paying?

DARIUS

Hey, let's get away. Take two, three days off and go to the cabin. Just you and me. Be spontaneous.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Turn off the phones. Who are we going to piss off?

DAVE

Everybody. When?

DARIUS

Today, right after pizza... and the game. 4.5 is shipped. No deadlines. Everything's humming along. We'll just get in the car and take off. Yeah! Come on!

DAVE

Oh, I could really do that.

DARIUS

Yeah!

They hug again.

INT. TV NEWS STUDIO - DAY

A reporter is on camera with various shots of robocars playing behind him.

REPORTER 1

The robocar from GT, which has been hailed by both consumers and critics as a nearly perfect platform, has experienced a few glitches of late.

EXT. ROBOCAR SALES LOT - DAY

PANNING a line of sparkly new cars.

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)

The glitches are rare and never compromise safety, but when they occur, they make the headlines.

EXT. FLOWER SHOP - AFTERNOON

DRIVER 1 is standing by his robocar in front of the shop. The shop owner waves from the door.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DRIVER 1

On my drive home from work, it would just stop outside this flower shop and sit there for a few minutes. Then, take off again.

INT. DRIVER 2'S CAR - DAY

DRIVER 2 is talking to the O.S. interviewer with his glasses on.

DRIVER 2

I finally figured out that it wasn't letting me drive at night until I put my glasses on.

EXT. PARKING LOT - DAY

DRIVER 3 is sitting in his customized robocar, talking to the O.S. interviewer out the open driver's window.

DRIVER 3

I'd be driving along listening to my tunes and it would like change the station to some classical [BEEP].

EXT. VARIOUS SHOTS OF ROBOCARS DRIVING - DAY

REPORTER 1 (V.O.)

Rare, but baffling. Engineers and scientists aren't really sure if the faults are in the overall design or one-off anomalies. And to make matters more complicated, the cars can repair themselves and reboot their operating systems automatically without anyone knowing, which gives each car its own unique identity.

The last car is shot to make it look sinister.

EXT. OPEN DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Mateo's red robotruck is parked on the shoulder at the beginning of a long, straight stretch - no other cars in sight, just two lanes of hot asphalt leading off to the crest of a slight rise two miles ahead.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Mateo wakes up the screen and hits manual drive. The truck comes life - gear shifts, brake releases and WE HEAR the usual CLICKY, WHIRRY sounds.

He hits the pedal hard and steers on to the road. The truck kicks up a cloud of dust, veers seamlessly into the lane and picks up speed rapidly. Faster and faster.

EXT. OPEN DESERT HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The truck flies down the lane, effortlessly, straight as a bullet.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

The speedometer climbs rapidly and with ease - 60, 70, 80, finally topping 90. No vibrations, no funny noises, just like a silent rocket.

As he nears the crest of the rise, he eases back on the pedal, smiles. He's satisfied the truck has the power he wants.

EXT. DESERT HIGHWAY CURVES - DAY

Mateo's truck is on the shoulder ahead of a section of road that narrows a bit and leads to a patch with curves and bumps.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Again, Mateo starts the truck, then hits the pedal and steers on to the road.

ANGLE OUT front window as the truck picks up speed rapidly - 40, 50, 60. But as it comes to a curve it slows automatically. Mateo easily steers through the curves at the highest safe speed, just like a race car driver.

WE SEE the speedometer change to match the angle of the curves perfectly.

And no matter how much Mateo pounds on the pedal, the truck maintains the safe speed.

He eases up on the pedal, smiles, once again satisfied with the results of his test.

EXT. OPEN DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

Mateo is driving on another straight-away section of the highway.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

His eyes are wider now, mouth set tight. He grabs his coffee cup and takes a big swig, steadies himself. Then, he slams down on the pedal. He's thrown back in his seat.

Once again, the truck speed climbs - 60, 70, 80. When he reaches 90, he grabs the steering wheel hard, closes his eyes, and cranks it to the left.

The truck lurches a bit, momentarily crossing over the center line, then back.

Mateo still has his eyes closed and the wheel cranked hard to the left.

The truck slows after a few seconds, finds a safe spot on the right and calmly, logically, signals, pulls onto the shoulder and stops.

Mateo opens his eyes and releases the wheel. He sees where he is, realizes he's not dead and smiles broadly. Then, he gives a big WHOOP!

TRUCK (V.O.)

Estas bien?

MATEO

Yup!

EXT. EMPTY QUARRY BED - DAY

The truck is sitting at one end of a long flat dirt surface at the bottom of a quarry. Facing him, 1,000 feet away at the other end of the quarry is a tall, flat, vertical rock wall.

INT. TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

This is the final experiment. He steels himself, finishes off the last of a six-pack and tosses the can out the window. He closes his eyes and crosses himself. Then, he grabs the steering wheel hard and floors the pedal.

The tires kick up a massive cloud, and then head the truck at top speed directly toward the wall.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The powerful electric motor picks up speed quickly, topping 60, 70 in a few seconds.

The wall draws closer, but the alcohol has sufficiently loosened Mateo's brain to handle this blatantly stupid test of will. Closer and closer, faster and faster.

Then, just as he passes the point of no return, he closes his eyes.

The truck, on its own, suddenly slows just as rapidly, locks up the brakes, skids a good 20 feet, and comes to a perfect stop.

He opens his eyes.

EXT. QUARRY - CONTINUOUS

The dust slowly settles, revealing the bumper mere inches from the wall. He smiles, gives a WHOOP - mystery solved. The test was a success. He's found a new game.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Dave and Darius are winding their way up this steep, treacherous two-lane highway in Dave's luxury robocar.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dave is in the passenger seat, looking out the side window, thinking about the steep drop-off. Darius is "driving," sipping on a tall paper cup of red wine.

He reaches for the bottle in the center console and tops it off. The car is playing some relaxing, adult MUSIC.

DAVE

(Somewhat concerned)

You know, it's not safe to drink and drive.

DARIUS

I know. But if we can't trust the car, who can.

Dave watches, as Darius swallows a big enjoyable gulp.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Aaahhh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dave reaches for the bottle and pours himself a cup. Then, he looks back out the side window.

Darius begins to feel the glow and get all philosophical.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

We got ourselves a nice little invention here, man. Aren't you proud?

DAVE

(Still looking down)
I'm proud.

DARIUS

We're just hitting a little rough patch now. That's all. Just a minor course correction. Users are placing a lot of trust in this device. And it's trying desperately to keep up, you know, to please all those unpredictable, unreliable people.

DAVE

I'm sick of people.

DARIUS

All that erratic behavior is causing our device to look bad.

He pats the dash.

DAVE

Do you really think that?

DARIUS

I do. But it won't help to get all defensive about it.

DAVE

Well, too bad. I don't think we have to dumb down our product to please a bunch of Neanderthals, who can't even take the time to read the fucking manual.

DARIUS

The customer's always right.

DAVE

You don't really believe that?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARIUS

They paid us a lot of money to make them a nice car. But we made the car too easy to use. And now they're complacent about it. Who's fault is that?

BEAT.

DAVE

It's your fault.

Darius shakes his head and takes another gulp.

DARIUS

It's your fault.

The car suddenly begins to slow down. The two look at the speedometer, the screen for an answer.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The car signals and turns efficiently and confidently onto a wide spot, a safe distance off the shoulder.

Then, it stops and shuts down.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The two saw it happen, witnessed every moment of the weird, unexpected thing that everyone has been talking about. And here they sit, staring at the dead screens.

DAVE

(Quietly)

Is this one of those...

DARIUS

Yup.

DAVE

What do we do?

DARIUS

Well, a lot of Neanderthals panic at a time like this. We could try that.

Dave checks his phone.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Any service?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE

Yeah, but who are we going to call?

DARIUS

More wine?

He takes another swig. Dave has had it with his blasé attitude and snaps.

DAVE

Ok, Darius. Now is not the time for more of your fucking cynical blathering.

DARIUS

Blathering? I wasn't-

DAVE

We're in serious shit, asshole. We're on a narrow mountain road, with a dead car, in the middle of nowhere, in the dark, no one to call, there's a fucking 500 foot cliff, three inches from my door-

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Dave. Dave. Dave! Dave!!!

DARIUS (CONT'D)

Dave! Thank you for pointing out the obvious.

DAVE

Fuck you.

DARIUS

We have a problem.

DAVE

You think?

DARIUS

Yes.

DAVE

Well, I'm glad to see-

DARIUS

Listen to me.

DAVE

What.

DARIUS

Are you listening?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVE

Yes.

DARIUS

Get your laptop.

Dave sees Darius is dead serious.

DAVE

My laptop?

DARIUS

(Practically giddy)

We're going to debug the car!

DAVE

Holy shit!

Dave reaches in the backseat and fumbles around for his laptop bag.

DARIUS

This is the perfect failed state.
There's no way we could reproduce
this in the lab. One in a million
chance.

DAVE

Get the flashlight.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Darius is holding Dave's laptop and a flashlight, as Dave reaches in the open motor compartment and attaches a cable to the car.

Then, Dave takes the laptop, rests it against the car grill and boots up a diagnostic program.

CLOSE ON LAPTOP showing geeky diagnostic data fly by. The program is something Dave whipped up for testing purposes.

DARIUS

Well?

DAVE

(As he scrolls)

Umm. The operating system is
running fine. I can find no bugs.
No asserts. No flags. No errors.
The car slowed down, signaled,
pulled over, stopped and shut down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARIUS
What caused it?

DAVE
What time is it?

DARIUS
9:37.

DAVE
Which is what, 2137, so the event
occurred when, uh, ten minutes ago,
2127ish.

DARIUS
What are you doing?

DAVE
Looking at the event log.

DARIUS
The car has an event log?!

DAVE
Fuck yeah.

DARIUS
Well, aren't you clever.

DAVE
Thank you.

Dave finds something, and straightens up.

DAVE (CONT'D)
The car received a message at 21-26-
15. Some kind of warning or alert
maybe.

DARIUS
Can't you read it?

DAVE
No. It looks like an ID number I
don't know. But there's a shitload
of activity for 2, 4, 10 or more
seconds. It shows the IP address,
but I don't know what it goes to. I
need a browser.

He looks up at the dark sky.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVE (CONT'D)

Hey, turn on your hotspot and I'll
open it-

A BLARING TRUCK HORN pierces the silence from around the bend just ahead, and Dave and Darius react reflexively.

A moment later, a large dump truck screams into view as it flies around the curve doing maybe 70, the bed totally engulfed in flames that reach 10 feet into the air.

The brakes are out, the driver's barely holding on, and the truck careens faster and faster, back and forth between lanes down the hill in their direction.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

Continuing from the previous act, Dave and Darius watch as the truck roars past them and attempts the next turn.

The driver leaps out of the cab, moments before the truck skids off the road, crashes through the guard rail and flies into the air.

It tumbles down 200 feet and explodes against an outcrop of boulders. And it all happens in a matter of seconds.

Then, the sound of multiple POLICE SIRENS. Dave and Darius look back up the road as three police cruisers fly around the bend at top speed, lights flashing.

Up ahead, the truck driver is trying to stand, waving his arms. The cruisers slam on their brakes and pull up next to him.

Cops get out and approach the driver. They reach him and he collapses in their arms.

A loud EXPLOSION comes from below and the sky lights up from the flames erupting from the dump truck.

Dave and Darius trade looks.

DAVE

Holy shit.

The two start walking toward the scene in a daze.

Then, more SIRENS and flashing lights. They stop and look up the road, as an ambulance and firetruck come around the bend. The emergency vehicles pull up next to the police and the area is soon crawling with emergency workers, loading the driver onto a stretcher and pulling hoses off the truck.

A moment later, as if by magic, they turn to see Dave's headlights pop on. Then, the car starts and the cabin lights up.

The two run back to the car, disconnect the laptop, and get back in.

After they buckle up, the car signals, gently eases onto the road and continues safely on its way.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Dave and Darius are staring out the window, stunned, wheels turning in their heads, as the glow of the burning truck gradually recedes from view out the back window. Finally...

DAVE

We almost died. You know that, right?

DARIUS

Yeah.

DAVE

But the car... It somehow saved us.

DARIUS

I didn't know the car could do that, Dave.

DAVE

Evidently, it can.

Darius turns to Dave, studies him. After a BEAT...

DARIUS

(A bit sarcastic, as is his style)

So, tell me Dave. How would you explain this unexpected behavior?

DAVE

AutoLearn. Has to be.

DARIUS

I see. It somehow learned to pull over. When? When it gets an alert? From the police? 9-1-1? Runaway dump trucks?

DAVE

(Getting steamed)

I don't know, Darius.

DARIUS

You didn't program that?

DAVE

Not specifically.

DARIUS

Aha. Is this somehow related to-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE

The prime directive. Yes. It perceived a safety issue.

DARIUS

Oh, it's perceiving now, huh?

DAVE

Detected. It - the software - detected an unsafe condition.

DARIUS

How did it even know where to look?

DAVE

It's very smart.

DARIUS

(Getting more and more upset)

Oh, it's smart and it perceives. Great.

DAVE

Fuck you.

(BEAT)

It is pretty great, actually.

DARIUS

(Clearly upset)

Oh yeah, it's great alright. Problem is, our customers like to think they're in control of their cars. People are funny that way.

DAVE

It can be fixed. We'll fix it. Send out a patch.

DARIUS

How can you do one patch when each car learns differently!? Databases are different. Behavior solution sets are different.

DAVE

Obviously.

DARIUS

Where do we start!?

DAVE

I didn't say it'd be easy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

BEAT

DARIUS
(About to boil)
I want to hear you say it.

DAVE
What?

DARIUS
You know.

Dave looks out the side window, pounds his fist against the door.

DAVE
Ok, you were right.

DARIUS
And?!

DAVE
We're in deep shit.

Darius picks up his wine cup and inhales the rest of it.

INT. WEXLER DISPATCH - DAY

It's a Wexler Shipping Company employee training video, teaching about the wonders of the new fleet of GT robotrucks.

The actors are real employees playing parts. Cheesy corporate MUSIC drones away in the background.

The dispatcher types on her computer.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
After the dispatcher enters the
daily manifest into the trucks...

INT. WEXLER TRUCK - DAY

The driver calls up the manifest, then goes to the back of the truck and sorts packages on shelves.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
...each driver can call up the
manifest in their truck to check it
against the packages that are
loaded, and sort packages for the
fastest and easiest retrieval.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COMPUTER SCREEN

Per narration.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Now, here's where the magic comes in. The Wexler *DeliverMAX* system from Global Transport sorts the manifest automatically for the fastest route possible, using *AutoRoute*.

INT. WEXLER TRUCK

The driver presses *Start* on the truck screen.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

So all you have to do is press the *Start* button, and your GT robotruck delivery van drives to each stop in the order that makes the most sense.

DRIVING SEQUENCE

Quick SHOTS of the truck driving in various locales, and the driver hopping out and running to a drop off location with a package, mixed with SHOTS of the *DeliverMAX* program.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

When you get to a stop, *DeliverMAX* displays the packages to be dropped off or picked up, and any saved customer information, such as the preferred drop-off location.

EXT. RESIDENCE FRONT DOOR - DAY

A happy customer is talking to a happy driver.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

With *DeliverMAX*, you can focus on customer service, and leave the driving to GT.

INT. WEXLER TRUCK - DAY

An unbuckled driver tries to start the truck.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NARRATOR (V.O.)

And remember, at GT, safety is number one - getting you where you want to go, safely.

TRUCK (V.O.)

Thank you for buckling your seatbelt.

The driver smiles and buckles his belt. Then, the truck takes off.

INT. LOS GATOS BISTRO - DAY

It's lunch and the place is packed with excited young Silicon Valley types.

WE MOVE through the tables and spot DR. HUGH TURTURRO wandering in the lounge area, looking for someone.

A casually-dressed hipster TIFF DREDLOW (28) turns on his barstool when he sees Turturro and signals him over. Turturro approaches with a half smile.

DREDLOW

(In awe)

Dr. Turturro. Tiff Dredlow. I'd recognize you anywhere. It's a pleasure to finally meet you.

They shake. Dredlow gives a prearranged signal to the O.S. hostess.

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

Let's get a table, shall we? Glad you could meet on such short notice.

TURTURRO

(Cynical)

Well, I was in the neighborhood, so...

They are led to a secluded booth.

DREDLOW

Ha. Love that sense of humor. You can't have a future without a sense of humor, huh?

Turturro smiles.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

I've read all your stuff. It's exciting. The future, I mean. Wow. Isn't it? The one book that really got to me was *Look Out - the future may be closer than it appears*. Wow!

TURTURRO

I'm glad you liked it.

A casual WAITER comes to their table.

WAITER

What can I get you gentlemen?

DREDLOW

Hugh?

(To Turturro)

I'm sorry, Can I call you Hugh?

TURTURRO

Of course.

DREDLOW

What'll it be?

TURTURRO

Dirty martini.

DREDLOW

Make it two.

The waiter leaves.

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

So, your book. Hell, yes. I mean anyone can create science fiction, right? But it takes, I don't know, someone with a real talent for seeing all the possibilities, clearly, whether they be good or bad.

TURTURRO

I'm glad to hear you say that. There are so many charlatans out there. It's difficult to rise above the clutter.

DREDLOW

You got to earn the right if you want to call yourself a futurist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TURTURRO

I don't disagree.

DREDLOW

And you've certainly earned it.

TURTURRO

Thank you.

DREDLOW

And that's why I called you. I'm connected with a group that's very interested in the future. Of course, you'd have to be brain dead not to be. But things you said really resonate with the message we're trying to put out there.

TURTURRO

(Cautious)

What's the name of the group?

DREDLOW

American Technology Now or TechNow. I don't know if you've, uh...

TURTURRO

Can't say that I have.

DREDLOW

Understandable. We're new. Trying to get some traction. Trying to get some grassroots momentum building. You know? And anyway, I saw your last podcast and thought, whoa. This is it. This sums it all up. *You can't invent the car of the future and expect it to work today.* I got chills. That's what we're all about: future, yes, of course, but, not so fast. Let's rein it in a bit. Think about what we're doing. Not be in such a rush.

TURTURRO

Instead of causing the future, we need to allow it.

DREDLOW

Fuckin' A. Spoken like a true futurist.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

A few choice lines like that coming from a credible source such as yourself would add the clarity and sincerity we need to get our message to resonate with the public.

TURTURRO

Ok, what are you suggesting?

The drinks arrive.

DREDLOW

A partnership? An endorsement? An interview? We'll take what we can get. We're working on a real eye-popping documentary now that would, wow, just bring the message home to millions if you were part of it. *You can't invent the car of the future and expect it to work today.* Boom. Mic drop. Music up. Cut to black. (BEAT) What do you think?

They are silent for a moment. Turturro takes a sip of his drink, as he rolls the words around in his head. The deal seems to have everything he needs. He looks up at Dredlow and smiles.

EXT. LUXURY LOG CABIN - NIGHT

Dave's car is parked near the front door. It's not just any log cabin - two stories with a balcony, fronting a high-altitude view of a spectacular valley of pine trees.

INT. LOG CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The fire is going. Darius and Dave are leaning on furniture and pacing, as they share a pipe of locoweed.

DAVE

It's Nao. Got to be.

DARIUS

Can't blame it all on Nao. It's the code we bought from NextStep plus ours.

DAVE

I agree. But if it was just our code...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARIUS
The car wouldn't work.

DAVE
Well, it would work. It just
wouldn't, you know...

DARIUS
(Hates the word)
Be "cool."

DAVE
Darius.

Darius explodes. He heads with purpose over to a table with
an open wine bottle.

DARIUS
Well pardon me, but if it sounds
like I'm gloating, I am. And it
feels good. Real good. This is a
big one. A big fat, nasty gloat.

He tops off a glass and heads toward Dave with finger
pointed.

DARIUS (CONT'D)
Filled with a huge butt-load of
greasy, steamy, stinking I-told-you-
so's. And I'm not going to let it
go. Because this has got to be it.
The time. The big teaching moment,
when you finally listen. You don't
stick to the playbook. You don't
stick to reality. You're always
hosing production so you can have
the next big shiny whatever. And
guess what? Bad shit happens.
Things fall apart. And here we are.

DAVE
You can't blame it all on me.

DARIUS
(In his face)
Not all. Just this part. This one
very important part. I wanted a car
that was reliable and just did its
job-

DAVE
A boring car no one would buy, go
ahead...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARIUS
You wanted a car that was all
"cool" and has a fucking
personality.

DAVE
So? The car is a fucking miracle.

DARIUS
A fucked-up miracle!

DAVE
People love it. It's changed the
world. It's made us billionaires.

DARIUS
It's a monster.

DAVE
(Pointing back)
It can be fixed. If we can build
it, we can fix it.

Darius walks over to a big, wide digital whiteboard. He starts a list, getting more and more upset as he writes.

DARIUS
Alright. Where do we start? It's
buried somewhere in your code and
somewhere in Nao and then there's
the sensors and the powertrain and
the Internet, and all the cars it's
communicating with, and it's
millions of lines of spaghetti.
Millions, fed by AutoLearn that
keeps it growing. And it all comes
together in a fucking car that's
got a mind of it's own!

DAVE
Thank you for that, Darius. That
was useful.

DARIUS
I'm stating the facts!

DAVE
You're stating hyperbole.

DARIUS
Well, maybe I am.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVE

Well, what are you going to do about it?

DARIUS

Think! We're going to think!

DAVE

Think like a car.

Dave approaches the whiteboard list, and writes "Think like a car." Darius stares at the words, suddenly losing his buzz.

DARIUS

Has it come down to that?

DAVE

It appears that way.

DARIUS

Then, that's what we do.

INT. TURTURRO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

He is on the phone, as he peruses the glitzy website of American Technology Now, which shows happy staged people enjoying the wonders of futuristic technology. Floating text promises a bright future for mankind, as we share in the bounteous resources of the earth, bla bla bla.

TURTURRO

(On phone)

I don't know. It's all pretty vague.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. DREDLOW'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

TIGHT ON Dredlow. It's dark and sparsely lit.

DREDLOW

(On Phone)

Well, it's a work in progress. To get more content, we need more money and that's what the documentary is for. Once we have that, we can find the volunteers and build out our online presence. We'll get there. I promise. We're committed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

A lot of very serious people want the same things you do. And most Americans.

TURTURRO

A future we can live with.

DREDLOW

Hallelujah. Couldn't have said it better. Can we count on you for your support?

TURTURRO

I'll agree to be part of the documentary, and we'll take it from there.

Dredlow is elated, let's out a breath.

DREDLOW

Thank you, doctor. This is such good news. I'll be in touch shortly.

Turturro hangs up and goes back to the website.

INT. SECRET MEETING PLACE - CONTINUOUS

ANGLE ON Dredlow, as he sets the phone down.

WE PULL BACK to reveal where Dredlow really is. It's not his office, but a secret meeting place in a forest north of San Francisco. Of course, WE don't know that. All we can see is a large dark empty room that looks like the lobby of a creepy mountain lodge. And he's sitting by a large hot fireplace with two shady characters, BOLLITZ and STARK.

BOLLITZ

Good work.

DREDLOW

Thanks. It's all downhill from here.

STARK

Sure you don't need any help getting your film crew together? I got the resources.

DREDLOW

No, no. We gotta be careful, keep money out of it. I'll find some college kids to shoot it for free.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

If it even smells like big oil, we lose all credibility.

BOLLITZ

You're the expert. Cheapest campaign I've ever run.

DREDLOW

Take the money and get yourself a new suit.

STARK

It's time we nailed those Silicon Valley fuckers and their weenie electric cars.

DREDLOW

Perfect timing too. Global Transport is about to implode. New reports of robocars going off the rails come in everyday and they all make big headlines. If we play it right, we can turn the world against them. And now we have Turturro on our side.

STARK

Fucking brilliant.

They lift their glasses of pricey whisky and clink them together.

FADE OUT.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. VIEWER 1'S DEN - NIGHT

On Viewer 1 drinking a beer, as he watches his favorite right-wing host from the comfort of his middle-lower class La-Z-Boy.

INTERCUT WITH TV

Turturro is on the stump touting his new message and undoubtedly a new book, being interviewed on Halidoll Tonight by HARV HALIDOLL himself, popular purveyor of right-wing lies.

TURTURRO

(On TV)

The real danger is the people behind the robocars. Technologically, we're fine. It's the people pulling the strings we have to watch out for.

HALIDOLL

(On TV)

Who are these people and what do they want?

INT. HALIDOLL SET - CONTINUOUS

We jump to the studio where the interview is taking place.

TURTURRO

First, there's Dave and Darius and those curious collection of clowns at GT, who run their business like some sort of high school science club, where they play with computers and gadgets, and make cars that talk to themselves, and drive themselves to carwashes.

HALIDOLL

Funny.

TURTURRO

It won't be funny when the cars start driving into walls.

HALIDOLL

Who else?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURTURRO

The politicians and power brokers - they're the worst. The cars have many vulnerabilities thanks to GT, and that makes them easy targets for bad actors who want nothing more than to control us and take away our freedoms.

HALIDOLL

How are they doing that?

TURTURRO

You can't see it, but behind the scenes, the cars are actually "thinking" and collaborating with other cars through a little-known feature called auto-learn.

HALIDOLL

I had no idea.

INT. VIEWER 2'S LIVING - CONTINUOUS

An older man and woman are laid back in their recliners, watching the interview, waiting for some red meat.

INTERCUT their reactions with the TV. As the interview proceeds, WE MOVE in slowly.

TURTURRO

(On TV)

Most people don't. The rare accidents that were originally attributed to either operator error or a hardware glitch are now seen by many as intentional. For example, the cars will take control away from the driver if they think the drivers aren't being safe.

HALIDOLL

(On TV)

Who decides what "safe" means?

TURTURRO

You get the idea.

HALIDOLL

What if the car decided my belief in God was unsafe? What if it didn't like me carrying a gun in the car?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TURTURRO
What if it thought you were unsafe?

HALIDOLL
Ok, that's getting scary.

INT. VIEWER 3'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

A middle aged woman walks in and hands a beer to a portly man sitting in a comfy chair, hanging on to every word on the TV.

INTERCUT their reactions with CLOSE SHOTS of the TV.

TURTURRO
(On TV)
Exactly. It's happening too fast.
We need to step back. The dangers
of AI are surfacing and we can't
allow them to take hold.

HALIDOLL
(On TV)
What if it decides to get a carwash
while I'm driving someone to the
emergency room?

TURTURRO
I'm sure we can all think of many
examples-

HALIDOLL
What if I'm late for work one day
and it decides to, you know, go to
the beach or something?

TURTURRO
Anyway-

HALIDOLL
What if it's displeased with me for
some reason and drives into a lake?

INT. HARV HALLIBURTON SET - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE SHOTS.

TURTURRO
But, the biggest danger is self-
awareness. That's when AI
technology reaches the point where
the device knows what it is.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HALIDOLL

(Fear)

Knows what it is.

INTERCUT BETWEEN TENSE SHOTS of the Viewers, Turturro and Halidoll, with VARIOUS CRAZY ANGLES.

TURTURRO

Right. Computers store and analyze data. But no matter how fast a computer is, it doesn't have the ability to "know" what it's doing. Until it becomes self-aware.

Halidoll just stares, mouth agape.

TURTURRO (CONT'D)

In other words, it appears to be alive. Imagine what the world would be like if cars were smarter, faster and more capable than humans, and they were alive.

Halidoll is speechless. The fear is palpable in their eyes.

EXT. WEXLER TRUCK - DAY

Another training video. Sexy MOVING SHOT of a truck driving smoothly down a city street, with graphics and titles to match.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

One very important feature of the AI software built into each Wexler truck is AutoLearn. With AutoLearn, trucks learn how to interact with their environment. What does that mean?

EXT. LOADING DOCK 1 - DAY

As a Wexler large truck slowly backs into a difficult spot.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Well, take backing into a difficult space. The first time the truck backs in, the sensors and processor calculate the best approach to avoid accidents.

CLOCK WIPE TO:

LOADING DOCK 1 - LATER

The truck backs in another time.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The second time, the AI software uses what it learned to back in more quickly and efficiently.

EXT. WEXLER TRUCK - DAY

Returning to sexy MOVING SHOT from the beginning.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Without AutoLearn, delivering in today's world would be difficult to nearly impossible.

EXT. GREEN RESIDENTIAL BYWAY - DAY

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

INT. JAMES' CAR - CONTINUOUS

JAMES YESLER is driving home again talking with his friend STEVE on the phone.

JAMES

This weekend, I got the house all to myself again.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. STEVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

As he drives.

STEVE

I'm afraid to ask.

JAMES

It's not the same woman.

STEVE

How many do you have?

JAMES

Enough.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEVE

You're crazy.

JAMES

But I figured it out. Remember all that weird shit that happened with the cars?

STEVE

Yeah.

JAMES

(Excited)

They were talking to each other!

STEVE

The cars?

JAMES

Yeah.

STEVE

And that was causing the alarm to go off?

JAMES

Yeah! They send messages or something. That whole thing with her car stopping and my alarm going off wasn't some weird random occurrence. It was meant to slow her down and warn me.

STEVE

I don't know. That's pretty...

JAMES

How would you explain it?

STEVE

Random occurrence.

JAMES

We'll see. Madison leaves tomorrow afternoon. She'd kill me if she found out.

INT. JAMES' CAR - NIGHT

As James drives home with a woman from work, CLARICE. She's not his first choice, nor is he hers. She's looking at stuff out the side window.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLARICE
Nice neighborhood.

JAMES
Thanks.
(BEAT)
You hungry? I bought a pizza.

CLARICE
Yeah, thanks.

She picks her teeth. End of conversation.

INT. JAMES' BEDROOM - NEXT MORNING

HIGH ANGLE on James and Clarice asleep on opposite sides of the king bed.

EXT. GREEN RESIDENTIAL BYWAY - CONTINUOUS

As Madison's car approaches. The turn signal comes on and the car pulls to the curb and stops.

INT. MADISON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Again, she is flummoxed. Pounds her hands on the steering wheel, checks the dead screen. She speaks to the car phone system.

MADISON
Marge.

MARGE THE CAR (V.O.)
Yes.

MADISON
Call roadside assistance.

ROADSIDE ASST (V.O.)
You've reached Roadside Assistance.
Press 1 to find out about lowering
your insurance rates-

She presses the hang up button on the steering wheel.

MADISON
Marge.

MARGE THE CAR (V.O.)
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADISON

Call home.

INT. JAMES' LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As a mad scramble is underway. James is standing partially dressed at the front door, with the same neighbors standing outside complaining about the CAR ALARM that has been going on for a few minutes.

He answers his cell phone.

JAMES

(On phone)

Hi Maddy.

The alarm stops. He shrugs to the neighbor lady and closes the door.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MADISON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

MADISON

Weirdest thing. My car stopped again.

James runs into the bedroom and gestures to Clarice to hurry up getting her clothes on, as he finishes his shoes.

MADISON (CONT'D)

I started to call roadside assistance, but if it's like last time, it'll start up on its own after a minute. So, I'm just going to wait it out. Maybe it overheats or something.

JAMES

I think that's a good plan. I might go out for a bit but I'll be right back.

MADISON

Are you ok?

JAMES

Yeah. Why?

MADISON

You're out of breath.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMES

Uh, yeah. I've been running around,
straightening things up.

James and Clarice power walk out the door.

INT. JAMES'S KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

As they head to the garage door.

MADISON

Since when do you straighten things
up?

JAMES

I don't know. Just got in the mood.

MADISON

Well, don't pull a muscle.

JAMES

See you soon. Bye.

They hang up. James and Clarice rush into the garage.

INT. MADISON'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

She's looking out the window. There's just something about
James that feels off.

She picks up her cell phone and starts to check for messages
but almost immediately the car starts up. She's pleasantly
surprised. She tosses the phone back on the seat and watches
as it signals and gently pulls out into traffic.

EXT. GREEN RESIDENTIAL BYWAY

As Madison's car continues driving. She doesn't notice James'
car passing in the other direction. A bit too close for
comfort.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO CHINATOWN - DUSK

CLOSE ON a freshly-drained chicken being hung in a storefront
window.

WE PAN to find Dave and Darius walking toward US with their
hands in their pockets, down a dingy brick alley. They look
like bright-eyed tourists searching for shop names amid the
cacophony of flashy colored lights and other-worldly images.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They pass a few more tiny shops and there it is. They stop outside an eight-foot wide business with a half-broke neon sign, *Lucky Noodle Chinese Restaurant*.

Darius double, triple-checks the address against what's written on the note in his hand. The two trade looks, then go for the door.

INT. LUCKY NOODLE - CONTINUOUS

The two squeeze through the front door and stand in the entryway. A hundred people are packed in tight around eight tables, noisily slurping down plates of garlic-soaked noodles.

After a moment, a waiter carrying a stack of plates, passes by on his way to a table.

LUCKY NOODLE WAITER
You wait, ok?

DARIUS
Next step!

They look around as the waiter drops off the plates and returns.

LUCKY NOODLE WAITER
Two for dinner?

DARIUS
Next step. We have an appointment...

The waiter motions for them to follow. They push their way around tables and bodies toward the kitchen.

INT. LUCKY NOODLE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They follow the waiter through the crowded kitchen rife with obvious health code violations. Then, out through a narrow hidden door in the back, next to the sink.

INT. LUCKY NOODLE HALL - CONTINUOUS

They enter a space, big enough for three people and stacks of boxes filled with over-ripe vegetables. The waiter points to a door with an index card taped to it, *NextStep*.

LUCKY NOODLE WAITER
Next step. Ok?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DARIUS

Thank you.

He goes back to the kitchen and closes the door.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

What should we, uh...

DAVE

Knock, I guess.

Darius hesitates, then starts to knock, but decides to just charge in.

INT. NEXTSTEP - CONTINUOUS

On the other side of the door is a dark, windowless room, big enough for four desks and a couple of chairs. It's tight and unusual, but strangely cozy and clutter-free. Three workers look up from their desks.

DARIUS

Hi. Is this... We're looking for NextStep Software Development.

One of them stands.

ZHIYUAN

(Smiling)

You've found it.

DARIUS

(Squinting)

Zhiyuan (jir-yu-wan)? Is that you?

ZHIYUAN

Yes. Darius, Dave. Welcome.

Dave and Darius stand, frozen with fake smiles, while they process. Their entire automotive empire is based around software coming from this squalid little place.

INT. NEXTSTEP - LATER

Dave and Darius are seated, eating take-out boxes of noodles, while the three NextStep employees sit gathered around Zhiyuan's desk, eating and listening intently to Dave's story.

DAVE

As far as we can tell, our GT software is running as expected.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE (CONT'D)

Your Nao software is running as expected. The sensors, drivetrain, all the hardware is fine. We can't find any bugs or errors. The car seems to be working, perfectly, as expected. But things keep cropping up. And we don't know what's going on, exactly.

ZHIYUAN

(Smiling)

Your trucks are driving themselves to carwashes.

DARIUS

(Not smiling)

That's why we're here.

ZHIYUAN

(Smile gone)

I see.

DAVE

It's very important that what we discuss here not leave the room. Do you understand?

ZHIYUAN

Yes.

(BEAT)

More tea?

Zhiyuan tops off their cups.

DARIUS

If people knew... I mean... Well, we're... none of us are media experts. Obviously. But it seems to me we need to get ahead of this. Somehow. Find a fix. Or else...

ZHIYUAN

We're fucked.

DAVE

Exactly.

Zhiyuan turns to his main partner Xuesong and they exchange looks. After a moment, Xuesong nods. Zhiyuan turns back to the two Westerners.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ZHIYUAN

I want to show you something. But you must agree to not share its existence with anyone.

The two nod agreement.

Satisfied, Zhiyuan reaches behind his desk. He brings up a dusty old laptop from the nineties, unplugs the charging cable, opens the lid and sets it on his desk facing them.

It's doing something. Lines of Chinese characters scroll up the screen sporadically, continuously.

ZHIYUAN (CONT'D)

This old laptop is running Nao software, and it's been running it nonstop for over 30 years. Are you surprised?

They nod.

ZHIYUAN (CONT'D)

We started writing code in 1988, but we didn't follow the western model of working upward, by adding layers to perform specific tasks. You see, Xuesong (shoo-ye) and I are doctors of psychology. We worked downward, starting with a very detailed understanding of the human mind, and then recreating the mind on a computer. It took five years to build the first Nao operating system you see here.

He points to the laptop. Then, to his normal desktop computer.

ZHIYUAN (CONT'D)

Western computers like this one rely on processor speed. Nao on the other hand is slow, like the human mind. It takes forever to add a column of numbers, but it does something that western computers can never do. It understands what it's doing.

The bombshell.

ANGLE ON laptop screen as it thinks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVE

Holy shit. It's self aware?

ZHIYUAN

It appears to be. To know for sure, we would need to communicate with it. Now it's just a mind trapped inside a box.

DARIUS

But if it had eyes and ears...

RESUME the group.

DAVE

(Getting chills)

Like the sensors on the cars.

ZHIYUAN

Depends on how they are connected to Nao, but yes, it's possible.

Zhiyuan smiles as he proudly describes his lifelong passion, as Dave and Darius see their lives pass before them. They are in such deep shit!

DAVE

Well, how about that. We thought we were just getting some really cool AI, but this, uh...

A few beats to process.

DARIUS

(Measuring his words)

Zhiyuan. Listen very carefully. Nao is probably the most amazing thing human beings have ever created. We are very, very impressed with all of you. You deserve like a million Nobel prizes. I'm serious. However, we need to walk back this capability.

ZHIYUAN

Meaning?

DAVE

We need to make the car dumb again. It can't be self-aware. It has to be a plain vanilla dumb computer system.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

ZHIYUAN

I'm not even sure it is self-aware.

DAVE

It's something... not good. And we need to walk back the capability. Create an update that brings us back to...

ZHIYUAN

We can't.

DAVE

What do you mean, you can't?

Zhiyuan is clearly losing his Zen. He stands and starts pacing.

ZHIYUAN

You see. Like the human mind, the operating system is constantly striving to improve itself. As we speak, auto-learn is evolving the software in half a billion cars. It's not the same code you added last week. And every car is different.

Dave and Darius feel the earth opening beneath them.

DARIUS

We get that. But surely, we can bring it back to where we were before the last update.

ZHIYUAN

No.

DARIUS

Can you write a version of Nao that's less, I don't know, aggressive with its evolving?

ZHIYUAN

No.

DAVE

Why not?!

ZHIYUAN

I don't write the software. No one does.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

ZHIYUAN (CONT'D)
(Pointing to the old
laptop)
It writes itself.

FADE TO BLACK.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

CARMAGEDDON DOCUMENTARY

Sequence from the American Technology Now conspiracy video, Carmageddon, featuring clips and hyped sounds and music stolen from various sources and edited out of context.

TURTURRO FROM HIS HALIDOLL INTERVIEW

TURTURRO

Imagine what the world would be like if cars were smarter, faster and more capable than humans, and they were alive.

Repeat the last word, as WE CUT CLOSER AND CLOSER with sound effects, reverb and loud drum hits for emphasis.

TURTURRO (CONT'D)

Alive! Alive! Alive! ALIVE!

IMAGES STOLEN FROM THE INTERNET

Shots of cars driving in Latin America full of kids (which we assume are being trafficked) and packages (which we assume is contraband.)

NARRATOR

(Deep, overly dramatic)

Noted futurist Hugh Turturro said it himself. They're alive. And there's ample evidence to show that robocars are a key player in the globalist plot to decimate our American way of life and take over the world.

FROM HALIDOLL INTERVIEW

TURTURRO

The car knows what it is.

FROM A STOLEN CONSPIRACIST VIDEO

CONSPIRACIST 1

It appears the liberal elites have revived their original plot to traffic women and children. And robocars are at the center of it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FROM HALIDOLL INTERVIEW

TURTURRO
(Extremely close)
The car knows what it is.

SHOTS OF DAVE AND DARIUS

Together, emphasizing their gayness.

NARRATOR
And the liberal government and
media don't want you to know about
it.

FROM HALIDOLL

ZOOMING IN

TURTURRO
The cars have many vulnerabilities
thanks to GT, and that makes them
easy targets for bad actors who
want nothing more than to control
us and take away our freedoms.

SHOTS OF DATE AND DARIUS

Taken out of context, showing how they're controlling the
masses.

NARRATOR
GT, run by the notoriously gay
couple Dave Walker and Darius Rice,
planted their software in every
robocar on the road today. Software
that has turned every car out there
into a living being, controlled by
GT and the liberal establishment.

FROM HALIDOLL

TURTURRO
The rare accidents that were
originally attributed to either
operator error or a hardware glitch
are now seen by many as
intentional...

FROM ANOTHER STOLEN CONSPIRACY VIDEO

Ghost images of the items mentioned float by.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CONSPIRACIST 2

Sex trafficking is just one small part of their overall plot. Drugs, pornography, weapons of mass destruction, chemical warfare agents, dirty bombs, even bio weapons. If it can be built, these living cars can easily transport it, under their complete control.

FROM HALIDOLL

TURTURRO

Behind the scenes, the cars are actually "thinking" and collaborating..

FAKE IMAGES OF ROBOCARS IN VARIOUS CRAZY PLACES

NARRATOR

Without human drivers, robocars can go virtually anywhere - into steaming jungles filled with piranhas, across deserts with heat no human can survive, even into outer space.

FROM ANOTHER STOLEN CONSPIRACY VIDEO

CONSPIRACIST 3

You can think of it as the globalist's own private army of living vehicles that will do anything they're told with 100% loyalty.

FROM HALIDOLL

TURTURRO

It's happening too fast. We need to step back. The dangers of AI are surfacing and we can't allow them to take hold.

FROM TURTURRO'S VLOG

TURTURRO (CONT'D)

You can't invent the car of the future and expect it to work today.

STOLEN SHOT OF CAR

Making it appear powerful and evil. Powerful music.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TITLE: Carmaggedon, American Technology NOW.

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE BY CONFERENCE POD - DAY

Darius and Dave are leading a meeting of the five AI managers. There's a tension in the group now that's never been there before. Notes cover a small portable digital whiteboard. JACK PILSNER, the AI test lead has the floor.

JACK

We have doubts. We all do. But the lab car did accept the previous update, uh, 4.4.

DARIUS

How confident are you?

JACK

I'm confident the lab car runs fine. But it never gets out in the real world. I mean...

DARIUS

Ok, I know.

DAVE

We need to install it on all the other test cars and any other cars we can find. Can you do that?

JACK

It's being done as we speak. But as you know, this kind of hit us by surprise. We aren't really set up...

DAVE

Well, you'll have to get set up. As fast as you can. Everybody. We need all hands on deck. 4.5 is not what any of us expected.

DARIUS

It's a disaster.

DAVE

And that doesn't leave this room.

DARIUS

As far as anybody knows, we're just making some minor tweaks. Understood?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE

And that includes everyone on your team, significant others, press, the guy at the convenience store. No one can know. Seriously.

He looks into each face. Clair the usability lead raises her hand.

CLAIR

I'm very concerned about AutoLearn and what happens when we rollback to a previous build.

DAVE

Believe me. We all are.

CLAIR

I mean, if you think we have a disaster now...

DAVE

That's why we're testing the hell out of it.

SOPHIA, the developer lead chimes in.

SOPHIA

But it seems to me if we went back to NextStep and asked them to update Nao...

DAVE

We tried that.

SOPHIA

Can they let us have the source code, so we can take a look...

DAVE

Good idea. They won't release it.

SOPHIA

That's crazy. We own it. Why...

DAVE

Suffice it to say, it's not in a form that can be looked at.

SOPHIA

What do you mean?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAVE

The source is machine code only.
Can't be edited.

JACK

That's crazy.

The group is shocked, start murmuring among them selves, as they begin to fathom the depth of the problem.

DARIUS

I concur. We're in a crazy
situation.

CLAIR

Don't you think we need more hands-
on knowledge of what users are
experiencing? I mean, we're working
in the dark here.

JACK

Relying on crap from the press and
social media.

DARIUS

I agree. How do we get it?

CLAIR

Oh, um. I don't know. Make phone
calls, one on ones?

DARIUS

Good idea. Damn good.

DAVE

Yes!

DARIUS

Thank you for volunteering.

CLAIR

But...

DARIUS

Any other volunteers? Jack, how
about you?

JACK

I don't have any experience with
customers, per se...

DARIUS

Clair will teach you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DAVE

Brilliant. New deal! Drop everything you're doing. This is pri one. I want you guys to track these people down. Call them, fly out to see them in person, whatever it takes. Jack download diagnostics and send it back here.

DARIUS

Clair, give us a detailed report on their experience, including repro steps. We have to be able to reproduce the bugs here. We want to know how they feel about the car, what went through their minds when the problems occurred.

DAVE

The rest of you, we need to ship the update Friday. Let's see what we can do.

Dave and Darius walk away and leave them in chaos.

JACK

So, Clair. Do you have time to get together later?

CLAIR

How about dinner? I'm starved.

JACK

I can do that.

They smile. We detect a nice energy between them.

EXT. WORKSITE - DAY

Mateo steps up to his boss THODE outside the construction office trailer. The large eight-story cookie-cutter apartment complex looms behind them.

MATEO

So, what's up?

Thode hands him an envelope.

THODE

You're off the job.

MATEO

What's this?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THODE

Last paycheck. You're laid off. Get your stuff and take off.

MATEO

What's the deal?

THODE

You know what's the deal. We're cutting back. I have to lay off ten guys. Sorry.

MATEO

That's not what it's about and you know it.

THODE

It is what it's about. Talk to the union steward if you have a problem.

MATEO

You think I'm a fuck up.

THODE

I don't have an opinion.

MATEO

Bullshit. I showed up late a few times and you gave me shit for it, so what. I work my ass off when I'm on the job and you know it.

THODE

As I say...

MATEO

Thode, you've always had this bug up your ass for me. What is it? Why are you always after me? What about Clark or your buddy Dick? I work twice as hard as those guys. Are they getting laid off? Huh?

THODE

Haven't decided. And it's none of your business, anyway. As I say...

MATEO

You got to give me a reason, man. You can't just hand me this shit and walk away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

THODE

Listen, Mateo. I don't have time to get into it with you...

MATEO

Well, get the time, fucker.

THODE

Using that kind of language isn't...

MATEO

Just tell me why.

THODE

We have to cut back...

MATEO

Why me?

THODE

It's nothing personal. We have to make tough decisions...

MATEO

Go fuck yourself, Thode.

Mateo storms off. Thode let's out his breath.

INT. ROBBER'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Luke is driving Asher and Wyatt in a GT robocar. It's a seedy industrial part of town after the heavy work traffic has died down. The three have ski masks ready to pull over their faces when the time is right.

ASHER

It should be mostly empty this time of day. You can park right in front of the door.

LUKE

I thought I'd park a little to side so the guy won't see me.

ASHER

We already talked about this.

LUKE

Do you want him to ID the car?!

ASHER

Alright fine. But not too far.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE
Just out of his view.

ASHER
Whatever.

WYATT
(Getting panicky)
You know. We can call this off
anytime and I'd be ok...

ASHER
We're not calling it off! What's
wrong with you?

WYATT
I'm feeling anxious.

ASHER
We all are. Just focus on how
you'll be feeling an hour from now
when you got a nice stack of bills
in front of you.

WYATT
I'll try.

LUKE
Wyatt. Jesus. Don't let us down.
Ok?

WYATT
I won't.

LUKE
You promise?

ASHER
We shook hands. We made a deal. It
wouldn't be ok to just...

LUKE
Hey, we're passing by it.

ASHER
I'm looking.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

They pass by the store. No cars are parked in the lot. Luke travels down a half block more and makes a wide U turn in the four-lane street.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then, he pulls into the lot and parks in the far left space.

INT. CAR

The three pull their masks down.

 ASHER
Luke, you don't need a mask.

 LUKE
Why not?

 ASHER
You're in the car. No one will see
you.

 LUKE
So. I don't see why you guys get to
wear-

 ASHER
Fine! Whatever. Wear a mask. Jesus.

Asher takes a pistol out of the glove compartment, and then Asher and Wyatt get out.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE

The two make their way to the front door and burst in.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

As planned, there's only one guy, a poor Muslim CLERK wearing a turban. He sees the two and starts pulling cash out of the register before they're even in position.

Asher and Wyatt land across the counter from him and assume threatening postures, brandishing the gun in his direction.

 CLERK
Do you have a bag or...

Wyatt hands him the bag and he stacks the bills in it.

 ASHER
What about the other one?

The clerk opens the other register and shows him it's empty.

 ASHER (CONT'D)
It's not very much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLERK
I just did a dump.

ASHER
What's that?

CLERK
Cleared out the register and put it
in the safe.

ASHER
Open the safe.

CLERK
I can only put money in. I can't
get it out.

Asher points the gun at his face and the clerk raises his hands.

CLERK (CONT'D)
Please. They don't tell me the
combination because they don't want
me to get shot.

WYATT
That's what they do, man.

Asher looks in the bag. There's about \$200.

ASHER
Ok, fine.

Asher grabs the bag and heads to the front door.

WYATT
Can I have a snack?

ASHER
No.

He takes a bag of chips, and they speed walk out the door.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

The two run to the car and get in.

INT. ROBBER'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

They close their doors.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASHER

Go!

Luke backs up and floors it out of the lot and down the street.

ASHER (CONT'D)

You can slow down. We got a nice boring robocar, nobody saw us, no point in attracting attention.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK - AFTERNOON

He's driving on the freeway in afternoon rush hour traffic, stuck behind a motor home doing 40 in the fast lane. He's about to snap. He lost his job, Thode's face is all he can see and now he has to deal with moron drivers.

He sees a break and powers into the lane to the right, cutting off a Volvo. HONK. He jets around the motor home and gets back in the fast lane. Then, it's another moron. A weenie economy car gets in front of him and slows down for no reason. He HONKS. Floors the pedal so the truck speeds up to the car and slows automatically to within inches of its bumper. The driver flips him off. He HONKS. The driver slows down more.

He sees a break to the right and jets into the lane, cutting off another driver. HONK. He's angry and shouldn't be on the road, but here he is. And here's another guy, a red sporty thing from the 80's. It pisses him off. He floors the pedal and comes to within inches of his bumper and HONKS. HONKS. HONKS.

No matter what he does, the morons pile on the freeway right in front of him. He terrorizes the red car by falling back and speeding up, then falling back and speeding up.

INT. ROBBER'S CAR

They've split up the money and are calmly ambling down an empty industrial street near downtown.

WYATT

Do you really think it was worth \$53?

ASHER

No.

LUKE

But it was so easy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WYATT

That it was.

ASHER

Anybody want to stop and grab a bite somewhere?

WYATT

Sure.

LUKE

Hey guys. Look.

Luke's POV out the windshield, a cop car.

ASHER

Nothing to worry about. We'll just stay back here and everything will be fine.

They watch the car in silence.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK

His anger level is increasing and the morons keep piling in front of him, a whole parade of stupid little cars and their stupid little drivers.

This time it's a beat-up Honda something, who for some reason has chosen Mateo's lane. Mateo terrorizes him too. Laying back, then flooring the pedal and coming right up to his bumper. Over and over.

This guy finally has enough and moves over. Mateo floors the pedal and moves up to the next moron. And Mateo starts over again. Terrorizing the Tesla. He sees a break and passes the Tesla. Then, it's another truck. He begins terrorizing him.

INT. ROBBER'S CAR

The robbers are still tailing the cop car.

ASHER

When's that cop car going to move?

LUKE

It's got to turn sometime.

WYATT

Why don't we turn off?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE

Where?

WYATT

I don't know. He's making me nervous.

ASHER

We just have to be patient. He's got to turn sometime.

The cop car slows and the flashers come on.

Just then, the locks in the robber's car snap shut.

LUKE

What the hell!

The cop car starts to make a fast u-turn in the wide empty street, possibly heading back to the convenience store.

Then, the robber's car slows.

ASHER

What's going on?

LUKE

I can't control it.

ASHER

Fuckin' A!

The car makes a panic turn left in front of the cop car and stops in the middle of the street, blocking its way.

The cop car slams on the brakes. HONKS. Then, it backs up and attempts to go around robbers. But the robber's car backs up and blocks the cops again.

The robbers are swearing and holding on to the furniture.

The cops HONK, but the robber's car holds its position.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK

He's made his way to the slow lane and is terrorizing an old lady in a Fiat. Then, he sees a break to the left and speeds around her, again cutting off a smaller car. HONK. HONK.

Mateo has reached the breaking point. He's slamming on the steering wheel, the dash, SCREAMING obscenities and flipping the world off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's a semi. He comes up to within inches of the bumper and backs off. Then, he cranks the wheel hard onto the shoulder.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREET

The cop car is right up to the side of the robber's robocar. The officers can see pandemonium inside the vehicle as the robbers attempt to open the locked doors. They can't even operate the windows.

The officers get out, draw their pistols and approach the car with caution.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK

He's driving on the narrow shoulder, sweeping within inches of the cars on his left, trusting that the AI will protect him.

Faster and faster. He guns the motor - 40, 50, 60. He has no plan. He's only interested in speed and getting somewhere fast.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL STREET

The cops are standing by the robber's car.

COP 1
Step out of the vehicle, please.

ASHER
(From inside)
We can't. The locks are stuck. We can't control it.

COP 1
What's going on here?

ASHER
The car is... stuck.

LUKE
It's driving itself. It just stopped here.

ASHER
I'm sorry. I wish we could.

COP 1
I need to see your license and registration?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The locks unexpectedly open and the windows roll down. The cops raise their weapons and the robbers reflexively raise their hands. The cops can see the ski masks.

COP 1 (CONT'D)
Out of the car please.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK

Faster and faster. The truck is now doing near 70 on the shoulder.

Mateo's POV out the windshield, a bridge column encroaches into the shoulder ahead, but Mateo maintains the speed. He's making all the wrong choices now. He knows it, doesn't care and he feels good.

Mateo's truck hits the column going over 80. The front wraps around it like tin foil in an instant, shoving a couple of slow cars next to it sideways. Then, the batteries erupt into flames.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END