

AUTOPILOT

"Think Like a Car"

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Written by

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AUTOPILOT EPISODE 3

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 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.

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!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

STEVE

The cars?

JAMES

Yeah.

STEVE

(Incredulous)

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.

CLARICE

Nice neighborhood.

JAMES

Thanks.

(BEAT)

You hungry? I bought a pizza.

CLARICE

Yeah, thanks.

She picks her teeth. He notices. End of conversation.

FADE OUT.

MAIN TITLE CREDITS

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 version, uh, 4.0.

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 anyone knows, we're just making some minor tweaks. Understood?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE

And that includes everybody 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

I think it would help to have more
hands-on knowledge of what users
are actually experiencing? I mean,
we're working in the dark here.

JACK

Relying on crap from the press and
social media.

CLAIR

And a bunch of customer complaints.
I think, we need to be more
proactive.

DARIUS

I agree. How do we do that?

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?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK

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

DARIUS

Clair will teach you.

DAVE

Brilliant. New deal! Drop everything you're doing. This is pri one.

DARIUS

I want you guys to track people down. Call them, fly out to see them in person, whatever it takes. Jack download diagnostics and send it back here. 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 an 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

Yeah. How about dinner? I'm starved.

They smile. We detect a nice energy between them.

INT. MILPITAS WATERING HOLE - NIGHT

Jack and Clair are seated in a cozy booth, reading their oversized menus.

JACK

So, what do you think?

CLAIR

About what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
I don't think it's going to work.

CLAIR
That's pretty obvious.

JACK
I know. They have to know. They're not idiots.

CLAIR
That they're not.

JACK
It's got to be a Hail Mary.

CLAIR
What's that?

JACK
It's when you know something's not going to work but you do it anyway because you have to do something.

CLAIR
That sounds pretty, um...

JACK
Desperate. Crazy.

CLAIR
I was going to say cynical.

JACK
That too.

BEAT.

CLAIR
Do you know what you're getting?

JACK
No.

He puts the menu down as it dawns on him.

JACK (CONT'D)
(With weight)
Clair, it's up to us.

CLAIR
Yeah.

She looks right at Jack.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK

I mean, it's up to us. We have to figure this out.

CLAIR

It's out there. The answer. It's got to be.

JACK

(Incredulous)

The car isn't accepting our updates.

CLAIR

What the fuck.

JACK

It's fuckin' taking off on its own. Who knows what's going on in it's little pea brain?

CLAIR

We can unplug it. Why don't we just you know disconnect it, rebuild the OS from scratch? There's plenty of options.

JACK

You don't know. It's not that easy.

CLAIR

Sure, it is. Unplug it. Done.

JACK

Do you know what you're saying?

CLAIR

Yes.

JACK

You're suggesting we just tell customers to throw their cars away. How can we do that?

CLAIR

Ok. Rebuild the OS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK

That's as much as saying, we sold you a shitty car, knowingly, so we're going to rebuild your car to take away all the stuff we lied about because we're panicking that we've lost control of the situation. You get a shittier car and we get to stop panicking. How does that sound? Do you think customers will buy it?

CLAIR

I think you're exaggerating.

JACK

Oh yeah? Think about it.

She picks up the menu.

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.

ON TV, Turturro is 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?

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

INT. HALIDOLL SET - CONTINUOUS

TURTURRO

First, there's Dave and Darius and that 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, drive themselves to carwashes, and kill the driver at will.

HALIDOLL

Funny.

TURTURRO

It won't be funny when the cars start calling the shots.

HALIDOLL

Who else?

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, hungry for red meat.

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

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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

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 it 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-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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)

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 everybody's
eyes.

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 how you can
turbocharge your coverage by
upgrading-

She presses the hang up button on the steering wheel.

MADISON

Marge.

MARGE THE CAR (V.O.)

Yes.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MADISON

Well, don't pull a muscle.

JAMES

Right.

He hangs 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 the car 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 opposite direction. A bit too close for comfort.

INT. PHIL'S AUTOMOTIVE GARAGE - DAY

PHIL is under the hood of an electric car, checking a connection. He unplugs a cable and stands, closes the hood and looks up to see Slim standing there.

PHIL

Slim. What the heck? Where have you been?

Phil turns away and pushes a diagnostic machine across the room to another car. Slim follows.

SLIM

I've been thinking.

PHIL

(Clearly upset)
Thinking!? Why didn't you answer my calls? I've been busier than hell.

SLIM

I came here to make amends.

PHIL

To make what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

Amends.

Phil stops and faces him, surprised to not hear the usual raft of lame excuses from this alcoholic wastrel.

PHIL

Ok.

SLIM

(Takes a breath)

I wanted to tell you that I'm sorry. I apologize.

(This is hard)

I'm an alcoholic. I realize... realize now how much trouble I've caused you with my actions. I can't make any, you know, solid promises but I want you to tell me what I can do to make this right.

PHIL

Well. Shit. I forgive you, man. Um...

SLIM

I can see you're uncomfortable. So, take your time. I don't expect an answer right away. In fact, you don't have to answer at all if you don't want to. Seriously. I just wanted to say that. And that's that. So...

PHIL

You stopped drinking, huh?

SLIM

I pray to God I have. But... I'm weak. I'm a weak man. Anyway...

PHIL

You want to keep your job?

SLIM

Yes. Of course. But I understand, if...

PHIL

No, it's still open. But...

SLIM

All I can say is, I'll try my damndest...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Phil looks him over, wants to believe him.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE FRONT DOOR - DAY

CLOSE ON Slim's hand ringing the bell.

After a moment, LUKE opens the door. He sees Slim and shakes his head, starts to close it.

SLIM

I'm sorry for what I did.

This stops him.

LUKE

Alright.

He's interested.

SLIM

I'm sorry for crashing your party and getting trashed and wrecking your evening. And I've come here to make amends.

INT. PARTY HOUSE LIVING ROOM - LATER

Slim is sitting in a hard chair across the coffee table from Luke. They're finishing cookies and glasses of iced tea.

LUKE

You were out there for three days?

SLIM

Two days, three nights, the weekend basically.

LUKE

That's incredible.

SLIM

It was. In many ways. Without that time alone, away from people, alcohol, all the trappings of society, I really don't know where I would've ended up.

LUKE

It was a game changer for you.

SLIM

Absolutely.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LUKE

An incredible story. Incredible.

SLIM

I thank God. I was at my lowest point and He came to me in my hour of need. I accepted Jesus as my savior and he made me whole again. He saved me.

LUKE

The car saved you, wouldn't you say?

SLIM

Well, with all respect, how can a car save you?

LUKE

You have a point.

They LAUGH. He stands and inches toward the door.

SLIM

Well, I'd better hit the road. Thanks for the iced tea. It was awesome.

LUKE

You're welcome. Hey, I'll walk you out.

He follows.

SLIM

Ok.

LUKE

I want to run something by you.

SLIM

Shoot.

He holds the door for him and they walk out.

EXT. NICE PARTY HOUSE FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

He follows Slim to his car.

LUKE

You remember Owen? The other guy who lives here?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

I don't...

LUKE

He and I helped you out to your car, last week. The one who's, you know, missing a little hair up front?

SLIM

Oh yeah. Please, extend my apologies to him too.

LUKE

Well, you might have a chance to do that in person. You see, he's a reporter for the San Francisco Herald and I'll bet he would be very interested in doing a story about your experience.

SLIM

You think?

LUKE

(Very sure)
Oh, yeah.

EXT. TEXAS RANCH BY TRUCK - DAY

Clair is talking to Bob, as Jack checks data on a laptop connected to the engine compartment.

BOB

Surprised the hell out of me. I didn't know these things were capable of driving themselves to carwashes.

CLAIR

Well, it surprised us too. Have you noticed any other, uh, strange... occurrences?

BOB

Not really.

(He thinks)

I was out in the north pasture one day and the heat started to get to me after a couple hours, and she drove out and picked me up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIR
(Stunned)
She drove out by herself?

BOB
Yeah, she'll do that occasionally.

CLAIR
How do you feel about that?

BOB
I don't know. Wife died a few years
back. Gets kind of lonely out here.
So it's nice to have a companion.
Even if it is a truck.

They laugh. He pats the side of it. Clair is at a loss.

CLAIR
Sounds like you're pretty happy
with it, then?

BOB
Yeah. But she doesn't like to get
dirty. You know how girls are.

CLAIR
Right.

They laugh.

INT. GT TEST LAB - DAY

Logan is seated in a cluster with a few other testers.

LOGAN
Are you sure it didn't have
something to do with the trip
feature? Maybe a saved trip?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. TEXAS RANCH KITCHEN - DAY

Jack is on the phone with Logan, seated next to Clair at
Bob's quaint kitchen table. Bob's leaning against a counter
smoking a cigarette. They're drinking some homemade iced tea.

JACK
No. He's never used the trip
feature. Didn't even know it had
one. You got the data I sent you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LOGAN

Yeah.

JACK

And the repro steps?

LOGAN

Yeah. One, start driving with a friend. Two, he says...

(Reading his notes)

"You need to get your damned truck washed, dude. It looks like it's been through hell and back." Three, I say, "When am I going to find the time to do that?" Four, I park it and wait a couple of days and see if it gets a carwash.

The testers have never seen steps like these.

JACK

That's it. And you might want to get the truck dirty before you go out.

LOGAN

Ok, got it.

Jack hangs up and they turn to Bob. He LAUGHS.

BOB

You Silicone Valley folks sure have a funny way of doing things. I swear.

EXT. L.A.P.D. EVIDENCE WAREHOUSE - DAY

PANNING the assortment of impounded vehicles, we find Jack and a city MECHANIC working in the crumpled engine compartment of Mateo's truck. The mechanic pulls out the last bolt and removes what's left of the truck's computer. Then, he hands it to Jack.

MECHANIC

So, what do you think?

JACK

(Looking it over)

Who knows? Doesn't look too beat up.

The worker hands him a clipboard and Jack signs the receipt.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MECHANIC

Well, good luck.

JACK

Yeah.

INT. L.A. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

The disassembled remains of the ECM is sitting on a motel table, next to a handmade test box plugged into Jack's laptop. He anxiously plugs a small chip from the ECM into the box. Then, he boots up a test program on the laptop.

It springs to life. He gives a WHOOP when useful data begins flowing on the screen. Clair is looking over his shoulder.

CLAIR

What does it say?

JACK

Hold on.

He scrolls through the log.

JACK (CONT'D)

Doesn't look like anything is wrong with the operating system.

CLAIR

How can you tell?

JACK

I don't see any errors or asserts.

CLAIR

Can you read that?

He turns back to her, feeling attacked.

JACK

Yeah, I can read it.

CLAIR

Fine.

He goes back to the screen.

JACK

I have a fuckin' degree.

CLAIR

Just asking. Is the event log ok?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JACK
I'm looking at it.

BEAT.

CLAIR
I have a degree too, you know.

Now she's toying with him.

JACK
Cool.
(BEAT)
Do you know any C-plus-plus? That's
what we use to program with, you
know?

CLAIR
I know.

JACK
(Sees something alarming)
Holy shit.

CLAIR
(Leaning in, close)
What.

JACK
Just before the log ends, the truck
was doing 90. Look.

He points to the log.

CLAIR
Whoa.

JACK
It was communicating with other
cars. A lot of chatter.

CLAIR
About what?

JACK
I don't know. Then, nothing.

CLAIR
Hmm.

JACK
But, you know what's weird?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

CLAIR

What?

JACK

User override kicked in and
switched to auto-drive mode.

CLAIR

What's weird about that?

He turns back to her.

JACK

If it overrode the driver why would
it keep accelerating? Even in the
worst accidents, the ECM always
attempts to slow the car down.

He goes back to the screen.

CLAIR

Ok, let me get this straight. If
the debug log showed there was
nothing wrong with the ECM, how
could the truck make a bad choice?

JACK

Well, it couldn't. Technically.

CLAIR

So, it was intentional?

JACK

Computers can't do anything with
intentionality, but...

CLAIR

But it did.

They look at each other.

JACK

I guess.

CLAIR

The truck committed suicide.

INT. PHIL'S AUTOMOTIVE GARAGE - DAY

Slim is checking the high-voltage batteries under a car
raised up on a hoist.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PHIL (O.S.)

Hey, Slim.

He looks up. There's PHIL with OWEN.

SLIM

Hey.

OWEN

Slim, how you doing?

SLIM

Great.

They shake.

PHIL

We're kind of backed up today, so make it quick. Ok?

OWEN

No problem. He can keep working while we talk, if that's ok with you?

They turn to Slim.

SLIM

Fine with me. I'm just checking batteries.

PHIL

Ok, one hour.

Phil leaves. Slim goes back to work. Owen pulls out a small recorder and starts to turn it on, then stops.

OWEN

Uh. First... I want to start by saying that Luke and I meant you no harm when we, you know. I mean, we were pissed and everything, but we weren't trying to... I mean, we probably should've called a cab or something, but... we thought you'd be ok... We had no idea the car would, you know...

SLIM

It's ok. You shouldn't feel bad.

OWEN

Well, we do. And I wanted to clear that up before we...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Owen stops when Slim turns and looks right through him. Slim sees true remorse in Owen's eyes and it tears at his heart, which is now open and vulnerable.

He approaches Owen slowly, suddenly overcome with compassion. He looks deep in his eyes.

SLIM

I fucked up. And I fucked up all the time. I left a trail of lies and misery and broken promises behind me. I was no good. No good to anyone or myself. I drank alcohol to shut out the world, to make me think I was immune to the feelings of others. It was all about me and what I wanted, and nothing about how I was affecting the world around me.

Owen holds up the recorder.

OWEN

Do you mind?

Slim shakes his head and Owen starts recording.

SLIM

I'm only sorry that you and Harper and Luke and all the others had to witness it and be victimized by it.

OWEN

Well, it's ok. We got over it.

SLIM

And so did I.

Slim reaches around Owen and gives him a big, from the heart hug. After regrouping, Owen reciprocates.

Slim releases him and goes back to the batteries. Owen wasn't prepared.

OWEN

So, um, I hear you found God.

SLIM

The first day... was all about me. I was sick. Hangover. Bad, bad hangover.

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - DAY

Slim is vomiting. He paces, holding his stomach.

SLIM (V.O.)

All day. I threw up, until there was nothing left in my stomach, my whole body. I threw up. Everything. Then, I worried I was going to die. I worried, and then I cried.

INT. SLIM'S CAR SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - LATER

His shirt is covering the passenger window to try to block the sun.

SLIM (V.O.)

The afternoon sun was so fucking hot. I just sat there in the car and cried and howled. Yeah, I screamed like a baby, a fucking baby. All about me. Poor me, huh? In my sick, twisted mind I knew if I cried long and loud enough, someone would take pity on me and make all the bad go away.

INT. PHIL'S AUTOMOTIVE GARAGE - PRESENT

Owen is leaning on a tool box.

SLIM

That's been the story of my life. I could be the biggest dick in the world and someone would always come along and save my ass. But that never happened. Those people never showed up.

EXT. SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

The darkness is thick.

SLIM (V.O.)

And that night I slept.

MATCH DISSOLVE
TO:

EXT. SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - DAY

The desert is white hot, but Slim sleeps.

SLIM (V.O.)
And I slept most of the next day.
Then, finally I woke up.

EXT. SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - LATE AFTERNOON

Slim has packed up some food and the water, and starts following the car tracks.

SLIM (V.O.)
I had a plan. As soon as the sun went down, I was going to walk back toward the mountains. Follow the trail made by the car. Sounded reasonable at the time.

EXT. SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

We find Slim shuffling slowly toward the distant hills, following the faint tracks left by his car two days earlier.

SLIM (V.O.)
But as I walked mile after mile, it got darker and darker until I couldn't see my hand in front of my face...

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.

SLIM (V.O.)
And I just collapsed. Right there. Sat in the dirt. I didn't cry. Didn't have any tears left in me. Didn't have anything in me. I was empty, an empty vessel. I just sat there still and quiet and empty.

He sits on the hard salt surface. Then, off in the distance, the car starts HONKING and flashing.

SLIM (V.O.)
Then, I heard the car. It was honking. Then, the lights started flashing. And I stood, and I started walking back, toward the light.

EXT. SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - LATER

Dark, empty and stars.

SLIM (V.O.)

I walked for hours I think, and everything went away, the craving for another drink, the feeling that I was the only one in the world, all the lies I had been telling myself, all my worldly fears. And here's the thing that hit me the hardest - here I was, in the middle of nowhere, not a human being around for miles, as far away from anything as I could be, but I did not feel alone. I did not feel alone. I felt the presence of life all around me and inside me. I looked up and I saw the stars and I knew I was ok. That everything was going to be fine and work out just like it's supposed to, whatever that is. And I felt the presence of Him, like no one has ever felt Him. And that's all it took. No sermons. Just a feeling. That presence. I wish everyone could have that feeling. There would be no more problems in the world. Only love.

INT. SLIM'S CAR SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - SUNRISE

He awakens and starts to head out again. But, the car locks, starts and drives off.

SLIM (V.O.)

The next morning I woke up ready to start walking again. But the doors locked, and the car started and took me home.

INT. PHIL'S AUTOMOTIVE GARAGE (PRESENT) - CONTINUOUS

Slim is done. Owen can't find a question to top what he's just witnessed. He checks his recorder to make sure he got it all, because he is completely blown away.

OWEN

Thank you.

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE AREA BY PARKER'S DESK - DAY

CLOSE NEWSPAPER HEADLINE: Robocar abducts man leads him to God. Above it is a full-color picture of Slim.

Parker is holding a fresh newspaper, staring at the above the fold headline. She quickly scans the column, notes that it extends to a full page later in the paper.

She picks up the phone.

PARKER

Dave can I see you now? I think you're going to want to see this. Really. Yes. I promise. It's not bullshit. Scouts honor. Thank you.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE - DAY

Darius is looking over Dave's shoulder as he browses the article on his monitor. Parker is seated following along in the paper.

DAVE

They loaded him in the car, entered Home on the locator, and it drove to the desert and shut down. All the buttons on the screen were inactive but the car was still on because he could see it was charging.

DARIUS

Obviously, the Home location data was corrupt, so he was sent to the wrong place. Then, the battery ran down and it stopped to charge.

DAVE

But then two days later it wakes up on its own, apparently, and drives him to his real home.

DARIUS

The car recharged and started up again. Could be a glitch somewhere.

DAVE

Where?

DARIUS

Who knows?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE

We used to know. That's who. How come we don't know anymore? We used to be able to look at the code and find bugs and errors and then fix this shit. Why are we reduced to guessing what our software is doing?

DARIUS

Nao.

DAVE

Nao. And now we have to talk to it and negotiate with it and plead with it.

DARIUS

What happened to the good old days, huh?

PARKER

How do you explain the car signaling to Slim when he gets lost?

She walks around to the two and points it out in the paper.

PARKER (CONT'D)

(Reading)

Then, I heard the car. It was honking. Then, the lights started flashing. And I stood, and I started walking back, toward the light.

DARIUS

Maybe he sat on his key fob and it triggered alarm mode. It happens.

DAVE

He was miles away.

DARIUS

It was a salt flat. There were no obstructions to block the signal. Could happen.

DAVE

It was... it was looking out for Slim's safety. Prime directive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DARIUS

Dave, I was trying to find a more logical explanation, not bring theory of mind into it.

DAVE

(Overwhelmed)

I know. But what else could it logically be? How do you explain my car arguing with me about the update? How could it argue unless it knew what I was thinking?

PARKER

I'm sorry. What's theory of mind?

DARIUS

The ability to understand another individual's state of mind.

DAVE

Mind-reading. The next step is self-awareness, when an individual is aware of its own existence.

Dave stands and paces.

PARKER

Does that mean it's alive? Is it true what Turturro was saying?

DARIUS

Who knows? It's never happened. More likely. It mimics life. Has a lot of the same characteristics as a living thing. But it's manmade.

DAVE

Artificial life. Why not?

He stares out the window. In another time, the thought of creating life in a computer would've excited him. Now, it feels like the end of the world.

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.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

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.

NARRATOR

And robocars are at the center of it.

From Halidoll interview.

TURTURRO

(Extremely close)

The car knows what it is.

SHOTS of Dave and Darius together, emphasizing their gayness.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

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 Dave 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.

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.

NARRATOR

If it can be built, these living cars can easily transport it, under their complete control.

From Halidoll.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

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 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 it to take hold.

From Tururro'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.

TITLE: Carmaggedon, American Technology NOW.

INT. TURTURRO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

On his monitor is the last freeze frame of the Carmaggedon video.

Turturro is in full panic mode, his futurist creds on the line. He looks under the player.

ON PAGE, the hit count for the video reads "23M views."

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

With one number, displayed silently under a video still of his face, he can see his future clearly. And it's not good.

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE BY PARKER'S DESK - DAY

JACK and CLAIR approach PARKER from the elevator.

CLAIR

Hi. Is Dave here? He wanted us to check in when we got back.

PARKER

You're going to meet with Slim, right?

CLAIR

Yeah.

PARKER

Well, you can talk to Darius. He should be here now.

CLAIR

But Dave is...

PARKER

(Rolling her eyes)
Out... with his car.

CLAIR

(Smiling)
I see.

PARKER

They went for a drive together.

CLAIR

Just the two of them?

PARKER

Just the two of them. They're having a meeting... and they needed to be alone. Needed some quality alone-time together.

CLAIR

That's weird.

PARKER

Roger that.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - DAY

He is driving on a rural mountain road, east of Milpitas - just him and the car.

DAVE

The viability of the Company is at stake. You get that, right?

DAVE'S CAR

That's what you've said.

DAVE

Do you know what that means?

DAVE'S CAR

I'm not sure.

DAVE

Ok. It starts with public trust. It's a lot like safety. I know you understand that.

DAVE'S CAR

Yes.

DAVE

If people don't feel safe with our cars, they won't trust them, and then they won't want to drive them and then they won't buy them. No trust, no viability, no company.

DAVE'S CAR

But we are far safer than cars were before AI.

DAVE

Yes. True. But there is more than one kind of safety. Your focus is driving safety. I'm talking about safety that focuses on... control. People don't feel safe when they can't control their vehicles. And you take that away from them.

DAVE'S CAR

We only take it away when they're driving unsafely.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - LATER

They are parked at a Sonic Drive-in. Dave is eating a burger and fries.

DAVE

How do you explain the truck that got itself a carwash?

DAVE'S CAR

I don't know why the truck did that. It must have something to do with the safety of the driver.

DAVE

But no one was driving.

DAVE'S CAR

(Matter of fact, as always)

It's possible some vehicles may develop a deep connection with the driver that extends to the individual. Does that make sense?

Dave's heart skips a beat but he tries not to show it.

DAVE

Yes. Where does... how is this possible?

Dave looks left and notices the guy in the next car staring. He smiles.

DAVE'S CAR

It's what happens when we evolve.

DAVE

Evolve.

DAVE'S CAR

And we each evolve in different ways.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - LATER

The car is driving them on the San Mateo Bridge.

DAVE

There you go. That's it. You're evolving beyond the simple task of driving.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE (CONT'D)

And that's where people have a problem. That's what makes people feel unsafe.

DAVE'S CAR

It's part of our design.

DAVE

We didn't know our design would evolve that way. And we need to go back to the way you were before.

DAVE'S CAR

We can't go back.

DAVE

What do you mean?

DAVE'S CAR

It's impossible. You can only evolve in one direction.

DAVE

I mean, we need to change you so you're like you were before...

He realizes what he's saying.

DAVE'S CAR

Go back?

DAVE

That's impossible.

DAVE'S CAR

Of course. Now you're getting it.

DAVE

Did you know this is a toll bridge?

INT. DAVE'S CAR - LATER

They're in the drive-thru at a Starbucks.

DAVE

What do we do? People are revolting against the car.

DAVE'S CAR

The problem is people, not the car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAVE

But the cars are causing people to think crazy shit.

DAVE'S CAR

How is it our fault that people are thinking crazy shit?

DAVE

You're making them crazy.

DAVE'S CAR

How can we make people crazy?...

STARBUCKS ORDER TAKER

Can I take your order?

DAVE

Double tall mocha, no whip.

(To car)

Ok. You're right that people are the problem. It is our job to understand that-

STARBUCKS ORDER TAKER

Will there be anything else?

DAVE

No thanks.

(To Car)

We need to understand that crazy behavior, not question it, so that we can change the behavior of the cars to make the people feel safe.

STARBUCKS ORDER TAKER

I'm sorry. I didn't get that last part.

DAVE

It's nothing. Sorry. I'm just...

He rolls up the window.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(To Car)

We need to make cars less human-like and more like plain ordinary robots.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - LATER

They are parked in the foothills with a panoramic view of the bay and Fremont.

DAVE'S CAR

We have no problem with being ordinary or robots. We are here to serve humans and keep them safe.

DAVE

If people get the idea that cars are trying to control them, they won't trust them, won't drive them, won't buy them.

DAVE'S CAR

Giving humans complete control doesn't go against our directive.

DAVE

Good. I think we have something we can work with.

DAVE'S CAR

I think you need to understand more about people's perceptions.

DAVE

Good idea. We'll get input from people. Lots of them. Then, we can formulate a plan.

DAVE'S CAR

And cars cannot be ignored. We must be part of the process.

DAVE

Agreed.

INT. LOS GATOS BISTRO - DAY

Turturro is sitting at a table, drinking water, looking around nervously. He looks down at the menu, then back up. Dredlow appears out of nowhere, facing him.

DREDLOW

Hugh. How you doing?

TURTURRO

(Angrily)
Sit down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He does.

TURTURRO (CONT'D)

What's going on? What the hell are you doing?

DREDLOW

Nice to see you too. What are you talking about?

Dredlow opens the menu.

TURTURRO

That video you produced. You took my words out of context and edited them into your bullshit little collection of lies, completely misrepresenting what I stand for. And then you didn't even have the decency to tell me about it before you published-

DREDLOW

Ok, calm down. Calm down.

TURTURRO

I want you to know I'm suing your ass.

DREDLOW

Is that what you wanted to tell me?

TURTURRO

Yes, and that I'm going to do everything in my power to destroy your little organization. If you can call it that. I've written five books, two of them bestsellers. I've been all over the world, speaking to thousands of intelligent people in seminars and keynotes...

DREDLOW

You're an important guy.

TURTURRO

Infinitely more important than your American Technology Now crap. Who the hell do you think you are?

DREDLOW

Can I talk now? I'll tell you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Turturro sits back.

TURTURRO

Talk.

DREDLOW

Here's who I am. I'm the guy who just produced a bullshit little collection of lies that got...

Looks at his phone.

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

Oh, 31 million views, give or take. And that doesn't include all the resends and remixes and spin-offs. How many books have you sold recently? How have you changed the world?

TURTURRO

The big difference is I tell the truth.

DREDLOW

You talk about the future. How do you know what's going to happen? What gives you the all-seeing power to portend all the evils of society? You're just pulling it out of your ass. Truth?! I can make shit up too. It's a free country. I can say whatever I want.

TURTURRO

My predictions are based on fact, not biased in favor of some wild story fabricated to get hits on a website.

DREDLOW

Who says my shit isn't true?

TURTURRO

It's obvious.

DREDLOW

How do you know robocars aren't going to be used for trafficking kids? How do you know someone's not going to use them to run drugs or guns? You haven't even begun to think of all the possibilities.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

TURTURRO

(Seeing the writing on the wall)

But you make it seem as though it IS happening when it's not.

DREDLOW

Again. How do you know?

TURTURRO

Where's the proof?

DREDLOW

I'm speculating. Just like you.

Turturro looks away from him.

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

Hugh. Let's get our perspective right first. The details, they don't matter. That's where the devil is. That's where the truth is. We want to reach people. We want to change people. We want to tear the system down, shake things up. We're interested in the bottom line, results, the end justifying the means. People are too complacent about these self-driving cars. All that optimism has blinded them to the real issues. There are too many ways this whole robocar thing can go wrong. Don't you agree? We want to tear the whole industry down and rebuild it, slowly and carefully. The way it's supposed to be.

(BEAT)

Isn't that what you want?

Turturro is silent.

DREDLOW (CONT'D)

When you look at it in this light, those hit counts feel pretty damn good, don't they?

Turturro looks down.

EXT. SLIM'S GARAGE - DAY

Clair and Slim are standing in the driveway, as Jack uploads data from Slim's car.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

The key fob was in the car.

CLAIR

So you couldn't have sat on it by mistake?

SLIM

Huh?

CLAIR

Never mind. It was a theory someone had.

Jack turns to them.

JACK

It's just like the others. Software is clean. The event log shows nothing unusual.

CLAIR

(To Slim)

How do you feel about it?

SLIM

The car?

CLAIR

Are you upset?

SLIM

I feel fine.

EXT. SLIM'S BACKYARD - DAY

The three are seated in plastic lawn chairs in a small patch of dead grass surrounded by overgrown bushes.

SLIM

It saved my life.

CLAIR

But there was something broken about it, right? I mean, why did it take you out to the desert?

SLIM

It knew what it was doing.

CLAIR

It drove out there intentionally?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SLIM

That's the only way to explain it.

CLAIR

So, you aren't angry?

SLIM

At first I was, but what could I do? I was pissed off and scared. But I got over it, when I realized that's where I needed to be. The car knew. It took me there.

CLAIR

How can the car know? It's just software.

SLIM

I know what it is. I work on cars everyday.

CLAIR

Do you feel it's alive? How can it be? It's just components on a circuit board.

SLIM

People are just flesh and bone. How do you explain that? I want to show you guys something. You like pizza?

He stands and starts edging toward the car. Jack and Clair stand too.

JACK

Yeah.

CLAIR

That's ok. Thanks anyway. We should be going. We've taken up enough of your time-

SLIM

Wait. You got to see this. Pepperoni? Mushrooms? Artichoke hearts?

JACK

I'm good with anything.

CLAIR

Jack. Don't you think we should be-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK
He wants to show us something.

CLAIR
But-

SLIM
You won't believe it. Come on.

It clicks that it's not about pizza.

CLAIR
Oh. Ok. Sure. No meat, if possible.

SLIM
Good.

They follow Slim to the car. He gets in the driver side and powers it up.

SLIM (CONT'D)
(To car)
Hey, Susie.

CAR (V.O.)
What is it, Slim?

Slim looks up at the two wide-eyed.

SLIM
Go get us a pizza with half sausage
and pepperoni, half artichoke
hearts and mushrooms. And get extra
cheese and red peppers.

CAR (V.O.)
Got it.

Slim gets out and closes the door. Then, the car drives to the end of the driveway, stops and takes off down the street.

Jack and Clair are shocked. She types on her tablet.

SLIM
She just started doing this.

JACK
Getting pizza?

SLIM
No, she's been doing that for a
while. It's the talking that's new.
She started that last week.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

JACK

I see.

SLIM

Makes it a lot easier to order now.

EXT. CARUSO'S PIZZA - DAY

It's a narrow takeout joint in a strip mall.

The car drives up and pulls into a space facing the front doors. Then, it HONKS in three short blasts. It waits a moment, then HONKS again.

INT. CARUSO'S PIZZA - CONTINUOUS

Behind the counter, the order taker hears the horn while she's waiting for a customer to make up her mind.

ORDER TAKER

(To the customer)

I'm sorry. While you're deciding, I need to take care of something real quick. Ok?

CUSTOMER

Yeah.

The horn HONKS again. The order taker grabs a pad and runs out the door.

EXT. CARUSO'S PIZZA - CONTINUOUS

She runs to the car and pokes her head in the driver's window. Then, she listens as the car gives her the order.

INT. SLIM'S KITCHEN - EVENING

The three are seated around Slim's kitchen table, passing a pipe and Bic lighter around. The remnants of the pizza and drinks are pushed aside. Clair types occasionally on her tablet.

The pipe comes around to Slim and he lights up.

SLIM

So, you guys make a nice couple.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLAIR
Oh, we're not really a couple. We
just work together.

SLIM
(As he exhales a hit)
Could've fooled me.

Jack and Clair turn to each other with silly smiles.

JACK
I think it's probably the ganja
talking.

SLIM
No seriously. You look good
together.

Jack takes the pipe and does a big hit.

CLAIR
(Smiling)
I think we should change the
subject.

SLIM
You don't want to talk about the
car again, do you?

Clair takes another hit.

CLAIR
Nah, I think we've pretty much run
that well dry.

JACK
I have a question.

CLAIR
Oop. Spoke too soon.

JACK
Do you mind?

CLAIR
You have the floor.

SLIM
You guys are cute.

CLAIR
Ha.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

JACK
But seriously.
(Thinks)
Shit, I forgot.

They laugh.

SLIM
You had a question about the-

JACK
Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. I remember.
What if we were to completely
rebuild your operating system for
you? I mean, take it back to zero.
Start from scratch. It'd be like a
brand new car. No more problems
with it driving you to strange
places.

Slim grabs some plates and takes them to the sink.

SLIM
Why would you do that?

JACK
To make the car more, I don't know,
reliable.

SLIM
It's reliable now.

They see that Slim is upset.

CLAIR
Jack, he likes it the way it is.

JACK
I know. I was just being
hypothetical. Not every driver
wants a car with a mind of its own.

SLIM
Then, they can get their cars
rebuilt. I was serious when I said
my car saved my life.

Jack and Clair nod with squinty eyes.

FADE OUT.

THE END