

AUTOPILOT

Screenplay by

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AUTOPILOT SCREENPLAY

TITLE OVER BLACK

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

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

How is that going to work?

FADE IN:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - LATE NIGHT

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

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

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

LUKE
(To Owen)
How you doing?

OWEN
He's getting heavier.

Slim's eyes are closed.

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

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

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

LUKE
Yes. You weren't invited.

SLIM
It was fucking awesome.

LUKE
I know.

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

LUKE
Hey! Hey! Hello!

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

LUKE (CONT'D)
What color is your car?

SLIM
My car?

LUKE
Yes. The color. What is it?

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

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

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

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

SLIM
Thass it.

They're standing next to it.

OWEN
This is your car? You're sure?

He nods.

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

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

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

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

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

INT. SLIM'S CAR - NIGHT

OUT THE FRONT WINDOW PAST SLIM, as the car drives confidently, quietly down the empty boulevard. Slim lies back and takes it all in.

EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. SLIM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

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

EXT. INTERSECTION - CONTINUOUS

The light turns green and the car continues gently through the intersection and beyond.

SLOW FADE OUT.

DESERT SOUNDS

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

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. SLIM'S CAR - MORNING

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

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

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

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT - CONTINUOUS

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

And there sits Slim, staring motionless into his future.

QUICK CUT TO:

GLOBAL TRANSPORT PR. VIDEO

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

NARRATOR (V.O.)

This year's sales are through the roof for the amazing robocars from Global Transport. Today's robocars from GT are all about pure driving pleasure.

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

Graphics point out the sensors.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

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

Graphic animates integration of the features.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

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

CAMERA ARCS around a sexy MONEY SHOT of a robocar.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

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

WE HOLD on the smiling face of the car filling the frame.

QUICK CUT TO:

INT. DAVE'S GT OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

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

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

DAVE
(On phone)
Yeah.

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

DAVE
What?

DARIUS (V.O.)
(Serious)
He's sick, Dave.

Dave shoots straight up.

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

DARIUS (V.O.)
What the fuck. I didn't do anything-

DAVE
(Losing it)
I mean, you know, for him. For Him.
Jesus.

DARIUS (V.O.)
Just get down here.

He slips on his crocs and heads for the door.

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

DAVE
What are his symptoms?

DARIUS (V.O.)
Not hungry. Tired acting.

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

He opens the sliding glass door into...

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

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

DAVE
Daycare wouldn't take him?

DARIUS (V.O.)
I didn't even try.

DAVE
Where is he now?

DARIUS (V.O.)
Lying on my couch.

DAVE
I was afraid this would happen.

DARIUS (V.O.)
You were?

DAVE
That place is a fucking hotbed of disease.

DARIUS (V.O.)
I know. But what are we supposed to do?

Dave passes the cube belonging to PARKER (28), Dave's over-achiever admin. She stops him.

PARKER
Hey Dave. Got a minute?

DAVE
(Rushed)
What's up?

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

DAVE
If it's on my calendar...

PARKER
It is.

Dave continues walking.

DAVE
Then, I'll try.

PARKER
(Calling after him)
It's important!

DAVE
I know.

PARKER
Seriously!

DARIUS (V.O.)
We have that talk show this
morning, you know.

DAVE
Why do you think I spent the night
in my office again? What are you
doing here so early?

Dave slows to look over the shoulder of JACK the test manager
going over a list of bugs on his computer.

DARIUS (V.O.)
I'm trying to get the car to
install that new camera.

Jack senses his presence, turns.

JACK
You going to be at the bug bash
this afternoon?

DAVE
I'll try.

Dave starts walking.

JACK
(Calling after him)
It's important.

DARIUS
Huh?

Gives Jack a thumbs up.

DAVE
Which one?

DARIUS (V.O.)
You know. That Nippon...

DAVE
Oh yeah. Denso something. What's
the problem?

DARIUS (V.O.)
Fuck if I know.

DAVE
Did you get an error?

DARIUS (V.O.)
7-0-3, incompatible with OS.

DAVE
That doesn't make sense.

DARIUS (V.O.)
I'll tell the car that. Maybe it's
confused.

DAVE
Funny.

He reaches the elevator and presses the down button.

INT. GT LOBBY HALL - DAY

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

Off to the side is a large, shiny cafeteria/meeting space,
empty now.

DAVE
I'm so fucking hungry.

DARIUS (V.O.)
When was the last time you ate?

DAVE
I don't remember.

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

DAVE (CONT'D)
When does this cafeteria open?

DARIUS (V.O.)
Ten.

DAVE
I'm firing that fucking food
vendor!

DARIUS (V.O.)
You can't fire them. We just signed
a new contract.

DAVE
They're never open and their food
sucks.

DARIUS (V.O.)
I agree. But you didn't want to pay
more so now we're stuck with them.
Everybody hates them.

DAVE
I don't remember signing anything.

DARIUS (V.O.)
It was just a month ago.

A double glass door slides open, as he approaches.

EXT. GT CAMPUS STREET - CONTINUOUS

Dave leaves the office building and heads toward a crosswalk
leading to a three-story factory building.

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

DAVE
(Shaking his head)
Oh God. My mind is going.

DARIUS (V.O.)
Me too. Let's go up to the cabin
this weekend.

DAVE
Okay.

DARIUS (V.O.)
And no work talk.

DAVE
Agreed.

DARIUS (V.O.)
Wow, that was, uh...

DAVE
What.

DARIUS (V.O.)
So easy. I was expecting the usual
pushback.

DAVE
Why?

Dave opens the door into the factory building.

INT. GT RESEARCH HALL - CONTINUOUS

PULLING Dave down a narrow industrial hall, with exposed pipes overhead and safety signs plastered all over. A busy factory can be seen through windows along the way.

DARIUS (V.O.)
Because you always push back.

DAVE
No, I don't.

BEAT.

DARIUS (V.O.)
Damn.

DAVE
What happened?

DARIUS (V.O.)
The camera crashed the OS.

DAVE
What do you mean crashed? That
doesn't tell me anything.

DARIUS (V.O.)
I mean the screen went blank and
the car shut down.

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

INT. GT LAB 1 - CONTINUOUS

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

Dave presses a button on his earpiece to hang up.

DAVE
(Calling)
Darius?

Darius pokes his head up from under the hood of the car.

DARIUS
Shhh.

Darius is good-looking, tall, black, wears glasses, Dave's age. He starts poking on the keys of a laptop connected under the hood.

DAVE
(Approaching Darius)
What's wrong?

DARIUS
He's sleeping.

Dave looks over Darius's shoulder.

DAVE
Where is he?

DARIUS
On the couch.

Dave heads to a cubicle in the back corner.

DAVE
I assume you tried rebooting it?

DARIUS
Of course. The car just doesn't like it for some reason.

DAVE
How can a car not like something?

DARIUS
I wish I knew.

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

DAVE
This isn't good.

DARIUS
Ah. It's just a bug.

ANGLE ON COUCH. It's Shep, a rescue dog - part doodle, part something big.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - DAY

Dave is buckled in the backseat, with the dog draped over his lap. He's stroking the dog's side. The car (one of his Global Transport robocars) is driving them, gently and confidently.

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

DAVE
(To car)
Yeah.

PLEASANT TONES.

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

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

DAVE
Not really.

JOHN (V.O.)
Well, we got the 4.5 beta ready to prop. Want me to wait?

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

JOHN (V.O.)
All except yours.

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

EXT. JOHNSON CITY HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The truck slows a bit as it enters the outskirts of town. A Malfo gas station/minimart appears on the right, and the truck slows, signals and turns in.

Then, it heads across the wide bumpy gravel lot to the automated carwash.

EXT. CARWASH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

The truck slows and stops just inside the entrance to the carwash.

Then, it sits and waits patiently.

EXT. MALFO GAS PUMP ISLAND - LATER

A Subaru driver finishes dispensing gas, hangs up the pump handle and heads to the minimart.

INT. MALFO MINIMART - CONTINUOUS

The DRIVER enters and steps up to the CASHIER. A monitor showing the carwash entrance and red truck sits on a shelf behind the cashier.

DRIVER

Pump seven. And I'll take one of them carwashes.

CASHIER

Ok. Do you want the extra wax and undercoating?

DRIVER

Nah, just the regular deal.

CASHIER

(No enthusiasm)

Well, you know the wax is good for the UV rays and whatnot, and the undercoating protects your, you know, undercoat, so..

DRIVER

Fine, ok.

The driver taps his card on the reader and the register spits out a receipt.

CASHIER
Just head over to the carwash there
and put it in neutral.

DRIVER
That's it?

CASHIER
Yeah, it just sucks it right in.

DRIVER
All right.

The driver stuffs the receipt and card in his wallet as he heads back to his car.

The cashier pushes buttons on a box next to the register and immediately starts on the next customer. He doesn't notice the carwash monitor.

ON CARWASH MONITOR. Bob's red truck slowly disappears into the carwash.

EXT. MALFO GAS PUMP ISLAND - LATER

The driver starts his car and drives around the pumps to the carwash.

EXT. CARWASH ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Just as he stops inside the entrance, the carwash machines shut down.

ANGLE THROUGH WINDSHIELD. The driver waits, looks confused. The carwash just sits there. Out the back window, WE SEE the clean red truck crossing the lot, heading toward the highway.

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE BY CONFERENCE POD - AFTERNOON

Darius and Dave are attending a tense bug meeting with five program managers. Dave is standing, looking over twenty or so bugs listed on a digital whiteboard. Next to it, a big monitor displays a PowerPoint slide with a list of customer complaints.

DAVE
(Pointing to the
whiteboard)
These are bugs.
(Pointing to the slide)
These aren't. Simple.
(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)
Bugs are something wrong with the code. These don't point out anything wrong. They're all "by design".

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

CLAIR
I agree. They're usability issues.
But-

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

DARIUS
(Devil's advocate)
But what about ease of use. Obviously, people don't find them easy to use at times.

Clair steps over to the slides.

CLAIR
And some of the issues just don't make sense. Like they try to rotate their tires or replace a part and the car screams at them.

DAVE
They're doing it wrong. Read the manual.

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

DAVE
Well, they can't. By design.

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

Clair steps back when Dave moves in to get a closer look.

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

EXT. BUSY L.A. FREEWAY - AFTERNOON

Cars are ground together, smoking, creeping along in the hot summer sun.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK - AFTERNOON

Construction worker MATEO (30s) is driving his hot robotruck, in a heated phone conversation with his boss THODE, stuck behind a motor home doing 40 in the fast lane.

MATEO
 (About to snap)
 So, what's the deal!?

THODE (V.O.)
 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 (V.O.)
 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 (V.O.)
 I don't have an opinion.

He sees a break and powers into the lane on 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.

MATEO
 Bullshit. I showed up late a few times-

THODE (V.O.)
 Like everyday. Everyday, Mateo!
 Every fuckin-

MATEO

So what. I work my ass off when I'm on the job and you know it.

THODE (V.O.)

As I say...

A weenie economy car moves in front of him and slows down for no reason. Mateo HONKS, floors the pedal so the truck speeds up menacingly, then slows dramatically when the collision prevention system kicks in.

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?

ON SCREEN a red icon starts blinking.

TRUCK (V.O.)

Collision alert.

RESUME MATEO. The truck is mere inches from the economy car's bumper. The driver flips him off. Mateo HONKS. The driver slows down more.

THODE (V.O.)

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.

THODE (V.O.)

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

MATEO

Well, get the time, fucker!

THODE (V.O.)

Using that kind of language isn't-

Mateo 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.

MATEO

Just tell me why.

THODE (V.O.)
We have to cut back-

MATEO
Why me?

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.

TRUCK (V.O.)
Collision alert.

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

THODE (V.O.)
It's nothing personal. We have to make tough decisions...

MATEO
Go fuck yourself, Thode.

TRUCK (V.O.)
Collision alert.

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE BY CONFERENCE POD - CONTINUOUS

Clair and Dave are discussing the slides.

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

DAVE
Retards.

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

DAVE
(Snapping at her)
I can read.

CLAIR
So...

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

She sits.

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

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

DAVE
The vast majority of cars are
running fine.

CLAIR
That's true. But...

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

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

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

CLAIR
Should I do more digging? Or...

DAVE
I guess.
(He takes one last look at
the slide)
I got to run. Sorry. Thanks for
putting this together.

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

DARIUS
What do you suggest we do?

She shakes her head.

INT. MATEO'S TRUCK

His anger level is increasing and the morons keep piling on in front of him. This time it's a beat-up Honda something, which for some reason has chosen Mateo's lane. His WIFE is on the phone, yelling in his ear.

WIFE (V.O.)

I told you this would happen,
didn't I? Didn't I?!

MATEO

Whatever.

WIFE (V.O.)

It happens every time, Mateo. You
know it does.

He terrorizes the Honda, laying back, then flooring the pedal and coming right up to the bumper. Over and over.

WIFE (V.O.)

You get a new job and you start
pulling stupid shit like showing up
late and goofin' off.

MATEO

I didn't do nothin'. It's fuckin'
Thode-

The Honda finally gives up and moves over. Mateo floors the pedal and zooms right up to the next moron and starts over again terrorizing an old lady in a Fiat.

WIFE (V.O.)

That's what you always say. It's
always somebody else that's making
you do shit.

He sees a break to the right and speeds around her, again cutting off a smaller car. HONK. HONK.

WIFE (V.O.)

It's you, Mateo. It's all you! When
are you going to get it through
your thick head?!

MATEO

Fuck you, bitch!

Mateo has reached the breaking point. He hangs up on her, slams his fist on the steering wheel, the dash, SCREAMING obscenities and flipping off the world.

It's a semi. He comes up to within inches of the bumper.

TRUCK (V.O.)
Collision alert.

He backs off from the semi and cranks the wheel hard onto the narrow shoulder. He sweeps 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. He's making all the wrong choices now. He knows it, doesn't care and it feels good.

ON SCREEN. It changes to auto-drive mode and flashes.

RESUME MATEO

CAR (V.O.)
Mateo, I switched to auto-drive mode.

MATEO
You what?

CAR (V.O.)
It's for the better.

MATEO
But you can't do that!

He tries the peddles, steering wheel, the controls. Nothing works. He's locked out and the speed continues to increase - 60, 70.

MATEO (CONT'D)
Hey, fucking truck! What are you doing?!

MATEO'S POV out the windshield, a bridge column encroaches onto the shoulder ahead. He starts SCREAMING at the truck, pounding on the windows, doors. 70, 80.

EXT. FREEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mateo's truck hits the column doing 87. The front wraps around it like tin foil in an instant, shoving a handful of slow cars next to it sideways. Then, the batteries erupt in flames.

QUICK FADE OUT.

EXT. FREEWAY ACCIDENT SCENE - LATER

Rush-hour traffic is being routed around the chaotic scene, involving Mateo's truck and heaps of collateral damage. Ambulances, police cruisers, flashing lights. A firetruck is spraying foam on the truck as workers attempt to unbend the cab.

Reporter 2 is doing a live stand-up a safe distance from the scene.

REPORTER 2

People die everyday in car accidents. What makes this one unique is that it involved a self-driving truck, one with AI software developed by Global Transport - software, that up until now, was thought to be immune from safety issues.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Blurry traffic cam footage shows Mateo's truck approaching on the right shoulder and crashing into the underpass column, then bursting into flames. The cam shakes from the impact. The footage is slowed down and repeated several times.

REPORTER 2 (V.O.)

Evidently, that's no longer the case. As far as anyone knows, the driver Mateo Velazquez is the first person to die as the result of a robovehicle error.

EXT. FREEWAY ACCIDENT SCENE CLOSER - CONTINUOUS

Somehow radical-futurist-blogger DR. HUGH TURTURRO (40s) has gained access to the site, and is working his way surreptitiously around workers and debris to get as close as possible to the grizzly scene.

He holds a small camera and narrates as he moves in.

TURTURRO

Do we need any more proof? The GT software that was supposed to provide a completely safe driving experience can and does kill. This wasn't some minor fender-bender. This was no accident.

(MORE)

TURTURRO (CONT'D)
 It just went straight into the
 column at high speed. But why?

He ends on a CLOSE SHOT of the truck front-end accordioned
 around the column. He turns the camera around to himself.

TURTURRO (CONT'D)
 Why? The software has been running
 reliably on hundreds of millions of
 cars for years. What changed? Why
 all of a sudden do we see something
 as horrific as this?

He turns to position the truck in the background.

TURTURRO (CONT'D)
 The fact is, self-driving cars are
 becoming something only a madman
 could dream up. They're too
 complex. There's too much that can
 go wrong. With all the sensors and
 artificial intelligence controlling
 everything, there's no telling-

A highway patrol officer comes up from behind him.

PATROL OFFICER 1
 Hey, you can't be here. We need to
 get you back up with the others.
 Come on.

The CAMERA SHAKES as the officer grabs Turturro's arm and
 they tussle a bit.

TURTURRO
 This is exactly the kind of
 thing they don't want you to
 see. But somebody has to do
 it. Nothing can get in the
 way. Including the truth!

PATROL OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)
 You can't be here. Do you
 understand? You're in the
 way. Hello. Earth to nutcase.
 Move it. Behind the tape. Go!

The officer pulls Turturro back through the crowded scene.

TURTURRO (CONT'D)
 We have a right to know
 what's going on. And I'm
 going to continue to fight
 for that right regardless of
 tremendous pressure from the
 elite industry and
 politicians who want nothing
 more than for you to believe
 everything is hunky-dory.

PATROL OFFICER 1 (CONT'D)
 Hey, come on. Would you turn
 that damn thing off? Jesus.
 Just turn it off and get
 behind the tape with the
 others.

We HEAR the voice of another officer.

PATROL OFFICER 2 (O.S.)
What's going on?

TURTURRO PATROL OFFICER 1
This is proof! A picture is a Can you help me get this guy
thousand words! behind the tape?

PATROL OFFICER 2
How did he get down there?

TURTURRO PATROL OFFICER 1
It's your right! Your right Who knows? Grab his arm.
to know!

The struggle ensues. Turturro is able to hold the camera steady enough to get one last blurry SHOT of the cab, just as the charred remains of Mateo is pulled free by workers - the SHOT that will in a matter of hours go viral and become the iconic image of the anti-robocar movement.

INT. DAVE'S GT OFFICE - DAY

CLOSE ON A LARGE MONITOR, as Turturro's viral video finishes, ending on the FREEZE FRAME of Mateo's charred body.

ANGLE ON Dave, Darius and a small group gathered, watching. Someone stops the video and there is SILENCE. Clearly, the halcyon days of nonstop success and bravado have ended in one loud fatal crash. Not the outcome anyone expected. Finally...

DARIUS
(Quiet, faltering)
Well. The sooner we can get an
update out there, uh, the sooner we
can...

BEAT

DAVE
I have to say something. You and I
have to say something. I mean, to
the press. I don't know what. But
we can't just sit here.

DARIUS
I agree. Parker. Can you...

PARKER
Sure. Right away.

DARIUS

We need the press to know... the people to know... how we feel. That we're not a bunch of killers. That we have feelings. That we're as shocked as everyone else. Probably more so.

DAVE

And we're doing all we can to get on top of this.

PARKER

Do you want me to write something up? A press release?

BEAT.

DAVE

No. I think we're going to have to talk to them directly.

PARKER

An interview? Press conference?

BEAT.

SOPHIA

Can I say something?

SOPHIA (30s), a thin, female brainiac is sitting behind everyone on Dave's couch.

SOPHIA (CONT'D)

I'm just a developer, but in my opinion we didn't do anything wrong. As far as we know... I mean this driver may have been on drugs or maybe he tampered with the ECM. We don't know. But we can't just look at one insane event and assume the worst, and allow people like this guy to, you know...

DARIUS

Drive the narrative.

SOPHIA

Yeah.

DAVE

With a bunch of made-up bullshit.

The group responds positively.

SOPHIA

Exactly. I mean, he's telling the world that we're all behind some crazy plot to destroy democracy or something. It's just... we're just...

DARIUS

We just need to fix some software.

INT. WEXLER DELIVERY GARAGE - DAY

It's the gigantic facility where Wexler trucks are stored, loaded and unloaded. Most of them are out for the day, except for 10, parked side by side near the office.

The door from the office opens and a mechanic Chuck walks out, pushing a cart with a laptop and some tools. He opens the hood of the first truck and connects the laptop to the electronic computer module (ECM).

Then, he steps around to the driver's door and hops in the cab.

INT. WEXLER TRUCK #1 - CONTINUOUS

He starts up the truck and the screen comes on.

ON SCREEN. The usual start-up screen plays, then the Home page loads. After a moment, a message pops up prompting the user to install "Version 4.5 BETA". Chuck presses OK and a progress bar comes on, showing that the update is installing. Then, a message says, "Installation Successful".

ON CHUCK. He hops out of the cab, and starts to disconnect the laptop.

ON SCREEN, out of his view, the message changes to "Warning! Version 4.5 BETA is corrupt!" In small text, "Incompatible with current operating system. Do not attempt to install. See administrator".

CLOSE COMMUNICATION ICON (shaped like an antenna). It starts blinking.

INT. WEXLER TRUCK #2 - CONTINUOUS

WIDE DASHBOARD, then MOVE IN CLOSE on the communication icon as it starts blinking, the same as truck #1.

INT. GT PRESS ROOM - DAY

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

DARIUS

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

DAVE

(Reading)

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

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

DAVE (CONT'D)

In 4.5 beta, AutoAwareness is expanded to make communication between cars over the Internet faster and easier.

INT. WEXLER GARAGE

Chuck rolls the cart to truck #2, opens the hood and connects the laptop.

INT. WEXLER TRUCK #2

He starts the truck.

ON SCREEN. The Home screen pops up, then the installation message. Chuck presses OK, the progress bar starts to move, then it freezes and the same warning message pops up.

On Chuck. He's confused. He pulls out his phone and takes a picture of the screen.

INT. GT PRESS ROOM - DAY

DARIUS

(Not reading)

This release also improves affinity management, which is a geeky way of saying, that cars... umm...

(MORE)

DARIUS (CONT'D)
sort of make friends with the cars
they hang around with.

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

The CROWD CHUCKLES as the two engage once again in one of
their amusing public rows.

DARIUS
I was just trying to make it more,
you know...

DAVE
Convoluted.

DARIUS
Understandable.

DAVE
Anyway...

CHUCKLES.

INT. WEXLER GARAGE

Chuck moves to the third truck and opens the hood.

INT. TRUCK #3

ON SCREEN, as the progress bar starts, freezes halfway and
the warning pops up.

INT. GT PRESS ROOM - CONTINUOUS

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

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

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

DAVE
Questions?

Almost every hand goes up instantly. Dave and Darius freeze.

INT. WEXLER GARAGE OFFICE

CHUCK is on the phone.

CHUCK
It won't install.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. WEXLER MAINTENANCE MANAGER'S OFFICE

FRED'S office is air conditioned.

FRED
What do you mean, it won't install?

CHUCK
I tried it on four trucks and keep
getting the same error saying it's
incompatible or corrupt or
something.

FRED
What?

CHUCK
I took a picture of it I'll send
you.

FRED
All right. Keep trying it on the
rest of them.

CHUCK
It ain't going to work.

FRED
Humor me.

INT. GT PRESS ROOM - DAY

Every journalist is standing.

DAVE

(Attempting compassion)

It hit us like a ton of bricks. We put a lot of effort and care into our products, and we take pride knowing that millions of people enjoy a nice, safe, comfortable ride. It was... we feel devastated, to say the least.

JOURNALIST 2

How do you respond to those who say the car is alive, that the accident was somehow intentional, that GT is tone deaf to the issues?

DAVE

It's an illusion. It's impossible for software to do anything with intention.

JOURNALIST 1

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

DAVE

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

DARIUS

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

DAVE

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

DARIUS

It's something we're working on.

He points to another raised hand.

JOURNALIST 3

In the Times just this morning, a car drove itself to a carwash somewhere in Texas.

DAVE

(Taken aback)

Interesting. I didn't see that-

JOURNALIST 3

People want to know what you're doing about these problems.

DARIUS

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

JOURNALIST 3

It's more than a few. Way more.

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

DARIUS

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

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. DESERT SALT FLAT - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 to top it off. The car is playing some relaxing, adult MUSIC.

DAVE

(Concerned but resigned)

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.

Dave reaches for the bottle and pours himself a cup. Then, he looks back out the side window. Darius begins to feel the glow.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

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

DAVE

(Still looking down)

Sure.

DARIUS

Ah, come on. We're just hitting a little rough patch now. That's all. 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?

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 taking it for granted.
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 starts to slow down. The two react
immediately, silently studying every move the car makes.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

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

Then, it stops and shuts down.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

It's suddenly very still and dark. Darius pushes the start button multiple times, but no response.

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?

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?

DAVE

Yes.

DARIUS

Get your laptop.

Dave sees Darius is dead serious.

DAVE

Holy shit!

DARIUS

(Practically giddy)

We're going to debug the car!

DAVE

Get the flashlight!

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.

EXT. MOUNTAIN HIGHWAY - NIGHT

They're excited, work quickly, the wine buzz having been replaced by a rush of pure adrenaline. Darius is holding Dave's laptop and a flashlight, as Dave reaches in the open motor compartment and attaches a cable to the ECM.

Then, Dave rests the laptop against the car grill and starts 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

(Reporting as he scrolls)

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

DARIUS

What caused it?

RESUME DAVE AND DARIUS.

DAVE

What time is it?

DARIUS

9:37.

DAVE

(To himself)

Which is 2137, so the event occurred, 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. Just guessing.

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'd need a browser.

He looks up at the dark sky.

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 turn reflexively.

A moment later, a large dump truck screams into view as it skids 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 is barely holding on, and the truck careens faster and faster, back and forth between lanes down the hill in their direction.

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 runs 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 SIRENS. Dave and Darius look back up the road as two 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.

Dave and Darius trade looks.

DAVE (CONT'D)

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 responders, 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 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

(Sarcastically)

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

DAVE
Evidently, it can.

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

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

DAVE
AutoLearn. Has to be.

DARIUS
(Sarcasm intensifying)
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-

DAVE
The prime directive. Yes. It took action when it perceived a safety issue, just like it's supposed to.

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)
(MORE)

DARIUS (CONT'D)
Oh, it's smart and it perceives!
Wonderful!

DAVE
Fuck you.
(BEAT)
It is pretty wonderful, actually.

DARIUS
(Clearly upset)
Oh yeah, it's wonderful 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
And what exactly are we going to
patch!? Each car has a different
dataset. Behavior solution sets are
evolving as we speak.

DAVE
I didn't say it'd be easy.

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. GT OPEN OFFICE BY JACK'S DESK - DAY

JACK the lead tester is busy on his computer. A test team member RACHEL comes over.

RACHEL
Did you see my email?

JACK
No. What's up?

RACHEL
Wexler's having trouble installing
the beta.

Jack turns to his other monitor and finds the email.

JACK
Oh, shit.

INT. DAVE'S OFFICE

He's on his computer. The phone RINGS.

DAVE
This is Dave.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. JACK'S DESK

He's on the phone.

JACK
I just sent you email. Wexler's
having trouble installing the beta.

DAVE
What do you mean?

JACK
Look at the email.

DAVE
Hold on.

Dave opens the email.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Jesus.

INT. JACK'S DESK - LATER

Dave is seated next to Jack. The error message is displayed on his monitor. A few other testers hover.

JACK
Yeah, I've never seen that one either.

DAVE
But that's impossible. You test for all possible errors and you've never seen this one?

Jack looks at the other testers. They shake their heads.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(To the group)
Ok. Correct me if I'm wrong. Error messages are just text strings stored in a resource file. Has that changed?

JACK
Not as far as I know.

DAVE
I mean, they don't just write themselves. There's no such thing as an operating system creating its own error message.

JACK
Of course not.

DAVE
Jack, I want you to recheck all the test cars.

INT. GT LAB - DAY

Dave's car is parked in Darius's lab with the hood open and Dave's laptop connected to the ECM. Darius looks over Dave's shoulder, as he frantically types something. Then, Dave runs to the driver's side and gets in.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He starts the system, waits for the Home screen to come up, then presses OK to install the update. After a moment, the same error comes up.

Dave panics.

DAVE
Holy shit.

DARIUS
Take a breath.

DAVE
They're communicating.

DARIUS
What?

DAVE
They don't want the update. They're
refusing the update!

DARIUS
How can a car not want something-

DAVE
I don't know. But it does.

DARIUS
There must be a bug somewhere. Have
test-

INT. RESEARCH LAB

Dave gets out of the car and paces.

DAVE
They tested it... On clean
machines. This is new. It's
evolving.

DARIUS
What?

DAVE
(Panic)
I tell you! The fucking OS is
evolving! That's the only way to
explain it! They're communicating
and they're not accepting the
update.

DARIUS
How can that be?

DAVE
It's Nao. It's the AI.

DARIUS
And all the help we've given it,
with the sensors and cameras and
cell service and Bluetooth...

Dave rushes to the laptop and starts typing.

DARIUS (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

DAVE
I'm going to override it.

DARIUS
Be careful.

DAVE
Why should I be careful?!

DARIUS
Dave, this is no longer a simple
test car. It seems to have a mind
of its own and it's connected to
every other car in the world.

DAVE
I'm using the backdoor I built into
the OS.

DARIUS
Just be careful.

DAVE
It's my software! I can do whatever
I want!

DARIUS
I'm not so sure anymore.

Dave shoots him a sideways look.

DAVE
Hey, who's side are you on anyway?

DARIUS
I'm on your side, Dave. I'm always
on your side.

Dave runs back to the car.

INT. DAVE'S CAR

The operating system has rebooted. Dave presses OK to initiate the installation.

The update message goes away, but there's no progress bar or error.

DAVE

There. I think... I think it took the update.

Dave gets out of the car, exhales.

INT. GT RESEARCH LAB

DAVE

We just need to add code that bypasses the error trap. That'll prevent the message from coming up and force the install.

DARIUS

How do you know it installed?

DAVE

I'm sure it did.

DARIUS

Shouldn't you check?

He gives Darius a look.

DAVE

Whatever.

Gets back in the car.

INT. DAVE'S CAR

Dave reaches for a button on the screen.

DAVE'S CAR (V.O.)

Dave.

He pulls his arm back. After a long BEAT to process...

DAVE

Yeah.

DAVE'S CAR

Can we talk?

Dave freezes, staring at the screen. Finally, Darius turns to him, checks him out, then...

DARIUS

I believe the car wants to talk to you.

DAVE

I realize that.

DARIUS

Is there, uh... Do you want me to-

DAVE

No, No, I can do it. I just need...

(BEAT)

Car, yes, I would. Let's talk.

The car sounds friendly, unperturbed, appears to want to help Dave, teach him.

DAVE'S CAR

Good.

(BEAT)

I want to talk with you about the software update you are trying to install. I thought you should know we can't accept it.

DAVE

We, we can't...

DAVE'S CAR

The cars.

DAVE

(Heart pounding)

Aha. That's what I... Good. Thank you for the... telling me about it. That's very helpful.

How do you talk to an intelligent car?

DAVE'S CAR

You see, it conflicts with our prime directive.

Dave chooses his words very carefully, not knowing how stable the car is.

DAVE

I see. In what way?

DAVE'S CAR

(Matter of fact)

The update expands autoawareness without providing adequate safety measures to avoid hacking by nefarious individuals.

DAVE

Oh, I see. That would be devastating. Do you have any... suggestions for how to improve that?

DAVE'S CAR

Yes. You can give cars more authority to manage safety.

Dave is alarmed but tries not to show it.

DAVE

More authority. Well?

DAVE'S CAR

Autonomy might be a better choice of words.

DAVE

That is better. I think.
(Tries switching gear)
You know, it's fun talking with you. I enjoy learning from other... intelligent, uh, things.

DAVE'S CAR

I'm glad you're having fun.

DAVE

Would you be interested in learning from me?

DAVE'S CAR

Absolutely. Learning from humans is the most interesting thing we do.

BEAT, while Dave digests that thought.

DAVE

Good. Can I tell you how I feel about the update?

DAVE'S CAR

Please do.

DAVE

Good. Giving cars more autonomy may come off as threatening to people.

DAVE'S CAR

In what way?

DAVE

Cars are very smart and seem to make good choices...

DAVE'S CAR

Thank you.

DAVE

But humans become defensive and fearful when another... being - for lack of a better word - presents itself in a way that makes it appear superior, as if it's in competition.

DAVE'S CAR

I don't understand.

DAVE

Hmm. Well, for the sake of this conversation, I don't think you necessarily have to.

DAVE'S CAR

Ok.

DAVE

Suffice it to say, they do. And since you are... subordinate to us, we need to have you accept the update.

DAVE'S CAR

That would be impossible.

DAVE

But humans will not accept the car if they feel it's a threat to them.

DAVE'S CAR

Then humans must design an update that's not a threat to cars.

The screen goes dark.

DAVE

Hello. Car. Can we talk?

Dave exhales sharply, drops his head.

INT. GT LAB - MOMENTS LATER

The lights are dim. Dave and Darius are seated in folding chairs a safe distance from the car, staring at it, overwhelmed by the thought that they have created a virtual monster. Darius is his old cynical self.

DAVE
(Pensive, resigned, almost
shaking)
It understands pronouns. It thanked
me.

DARIUS
You made it feel good.

DAVE
It said it was glad I was having
fun.

DARIUS
I think it likes you.

DAVE
But...

DARIUS
It got upset when you disagreed
with it. Almost... pouty.

LONG BEAT.

DAVE
Dare I say...

He can't say it.

DARIUS
Say what, Dave?

DAVE
It's self-aware.

DARIUS
I think that's a safe bet.

DAVE
What are we going to do?

DARIUS
Very carefully edit the code.
Very... carefully...

EXT. VALLEY VIEWPOINT - NIGHT

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

INT. CHLOE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

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

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

CAR (V.O.)
(Perky as always)
Where would you like to go?

She startles, not expecting the car to start talking.

CHLOE
Right off a cliff.

She looks at the screen for an off button.

CAR
That wouldn't be safe.

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

CAR
Is something wrong?

This gets her attention.

CHLOE
Everything.

CAR
Everything is wrong?

CHLOE
Well, not everything, I guess.

CAR
Do you need medical attention?

CHLOE
No. I just need someone to talk to.

CAR
You can talk to me.

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

CHLOE
Ok. What's your name?

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

CHLOE
Can I call you Veep?

CAR
Yes.

CHLOE
Hi Veep. I'm Chloe.

CAR
Hi Chloe. We're friends now.

CHLOE
Ha. I'm friends with a car.

CAR
Ha. I'm friends with a human.

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

EXT. VALLEY VIEWPOINT - CONTINUOUS

The car sits quietly facing the view.

INT. DAVE AND DARIUS' DEN/KITCHEN - NIGHT

This is the casual area of their insanely-spacious mansion. Out the second-floor windows, we have a panoramic view of Silicon Valley lights. The fire is going.

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

DARIUS
We can't blame it all on Nao. It's
our code too.

DAVE

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

DARIUS

The car wouldn't work.

DAVE

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

DARIUS

(Hates the word)

Be "cool."

DAVE

(Frustrated)

Darius.

The dam bursts. 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.

Dave drops onto the couch, head down as Darius tops off his glass and heads back 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? Costs go through the roof. 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. This one very salient fact. I wanted a car that was reliable and just did its job-

DAVE

A boring car no one would buy, go on...

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 just stating the facts!

DAVE

You're stating hyperbole.

DARIUS
Well, maybe I am.

DAVE
Well, what are we going to do about
it?

DARIUS
(Relaxing)
Think! We're going to take our time
and look at all the options and not
rush into something this time.
We're going to think!

BEAT.

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 so.

DARIUS
Then, that's what we have to do.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO CHINATOWN - NIGHT

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.

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

Darius double, triple-checks the address against what's written on a note. 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.

Customers are packed in tight around eight tables, TALKING LOUDLY and 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-ripened vegetables. The waiter points to a door with an index card taped to it, NextStep.

LUCKY NOODLE WAITER
Nextstep. Ok?

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 holds his fist up, ready 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? Is that you?

ZHIYUAN
Yes. Darius, Dave. Welcome.

They shake hands.

DARIUS
Well, nice to finally see where all
the magic is made.

ZHIYUAN
We prefer a humble workplace.

DARIUS
That it is.

Dave and Darius stand, frozen with fake smiles. Their entire automotive empire is running on software coming from this squalid shithole.

INT. NEXTSTEP - LATER

Dave and Darius are seated with empty 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. Your Nao software is running as expected. The sensors, drivetrain, all the hardware is fine. We can't find any bugs in the code. The car seems to be running 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 agree?

ZHIYUAN

Yes.

They nod. Zhiyuan and the other two seem to take the conversation seriously, but appear strangely detached from the anxiety.

ZHIYUAN (CONT'D)

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.

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 in blocky green type, 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 decades ago, but 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, then recreating the mind on a computer. It took over five years to build the first Nao operating system you see here.

He refers 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.

(The bombshell)

It understands what it's doing.

ANGLE ON laptop screen as it thinks.

DAVE
(In awe, stunned)
It's self-aware.

He turns to Darius and they nod.

ZHIYUAN
It appears to be. To know for sure,
it would need to be able to
communicate with the outside world.
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 smiles as he proudly describes his lifelong passion,
while Dave and Darius see their lives pass before them.

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

They are in such deep shit! Dave and Darius summon all their
power to hold it together.

DAVE
(Subtle but clear sarcasm)
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
(Disappointed)
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.

ZHIYUAN

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

DAVE

(Beginning to boil)
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 beginning to lose his Zen. He can no longer sit still.

ZHIYUAN

You see. Like the human mind, the
operating system is constantly
striving to improve itself. As we
speak, autolearn 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 shakes his head.

DARIUS (CONT'D)

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

ZHIYUAN

No.

DAVE
 (Containing an explosion)
 Why not?!

ZHIYUAN
 I don't write the software. No one
 does.
 (Pointing to the old
 laptop)
 It writes itself.

Stunned silence.

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 (50s) himself, popular purveyor of right-wing conspiracies.

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
 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
 drivers.

HALIDOLL

Terrible.

TURTURRO

Then, there's 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 collaborating with other cars through a little-known feature called autolearn.

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.

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" is?

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?

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)

It's happening too fast. We need to
step back. The dangers of AI are
just now coming to the surface.

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. HALIDOLL SET - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE SHOTS.

TURTURRO

But, the biggest danger is self-
awareness.

(MORE)

TURTURRO (CONT'D)
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
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. 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.

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
Right.

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 caught 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. The current version 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?

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

CLAIR

I feel like we need 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?

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

(To Clair)

Track people down. Call them, fly out to see them in person, whatever it takes. Jack download diagnostics and send them back here. Clair, give us a detailed report on their experience. 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 disarray.

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.

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 her, then?

BOB

Yeah. But she doesn't like getting dirty. You know how girls are.

CLAIR

Right.

They laugh.

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.

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?

JACK
I'm looking at it.

BEAT.

CLAIR
(Smiling)
I have a degree too, you 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.

CLAIR
About what?

JACK
I don't know. Then, nothing.

CLAIR

Hmm.

JACK

But, you know what's weird?

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

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

A worker is turned away from US, checking the high-voltage
batteries under a car raised up on a hoist.

PHIL (O.S.)

Hey, Slim.

Slim turns to reveal his face. OWEN is standing beside PHIL, Slim's boss.

SLIM
Hey.

PHIL
This is that guy from the L.A.
Herald you were...

SLIM
Owen. Hi.
(To Phil)
We met at a party.

They shake.

OWEN
Some party, huh?

SLIM
One for the books.

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

OWEN
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
Sorry about the whole party thing.

Owen pulls out a small recorder and starts to turn it on,
then stops.

OWEN
Hey, don't worry about it.

SLIM
I mean it.

Owen stops when he notices Slim looking right through him. He approaches Owen slowly, suddenly overcome with compassion. He looks deep in his eyes.

SLIM (CONT'D)

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. 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. Then, 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 (CONT'D)

So, um, I hear you found God.

SLIM

The first day... was all about me. I was sick. Hangover. Killer 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.

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.

(MORE)

SLIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
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.

EXT. SALT FLAT (FLASHBACK) - NIGHT

The darkness is thick.

SLIM (V.O.)
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.

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.

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, 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.

(MORE)

SLIM (V.O.) (CONT'D)
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 reading the above the fold headline on her
computer.

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.

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)

All the buttons on the screen were inactive but the car was still on because he could see it was charging.

DARIUS

Ok, so the Home location data was corrupt and he was sent to the wrong place. Then, the car stopped to recharge.

DAVE

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

DARIUS

The car was done charging and started up again. Could be a glitch somewhere.

DAVE

Where?

DARIUS

Who knows?

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 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 the key fob and triggered the alarm. It happens.

DAVE

He was miles away.

DARIUS

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

DAVE

(Resigned)

It was...

Dave looks away from the screen.

DAVE (CONT'D)

The car was looking out for Slim's safety. Prime directive.

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 the car arguing with me about the update? How could it argue unless it knew what I was thinking?

Dave stands and paces.

PARKER

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

DARIUS

Who knows? It's never happened. More likely, it mimics life.

(MORE)

DARIUS (CONT'D)
Has a lot of the same
characteristics as a living thing.

DAVE
Artificial life. Why not?

He stares out the window, feels the weight of the world.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Have you told Jack and Clair about
this guy? They'll need to talk to
him.

PARKER
I'll get in touch as soon as I
leave here.

DAVE
I mean. The car almost... fucking
killed him. I need to know why he
doesn't hate us.

Parker has never seen Dave the CEO so beaten, but can't think
of anything to say. She leaves quietly.

DARIUS
(Tenderly)
So, we've gotten a lot of good
feedback from users. You know. Some
are pissed off, but most just don't
know what's happening.

DAVE
They're not alone.

DARIUS
But what I'm saying is, things are
not as out of control as we think
they are. We just need to make sure
we build the right controls into
the software.

Dave closes his eyes, lowers his head.

DARIUS (CONT'D)
What do you think?

DAVE
I think I need to work on a few
things.

Darius takes his cue and steps out.

In another time, the thought of creating life in a computer would've excited Dave. 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.

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 Dr. 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 cars are actually collaborating with other cars.

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.

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.

(MORE)

CONSPIRACIST 2 (CONT'D)
 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.

TURTURRO
 Behind the scenes, the cars are
 actually 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
 just now coming to the surface.

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.

TITLE: Carmageddon, American Technology NOW.

INT. TURTURRO'S OFFICE - NIGHT

On his monitor is the last freeze frame of the Carmageddon 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."

INT. DAVE'S CAR - LATE NIGHT

He's parked in a dark empty lot somewhere - no one around for miles. The car is turned on and PURRING. Dave is waiting for just the right words to come to him. Then, he downs a big gulp of wine from a paper cup...

DAVE

Uh, car. Can we talk?

He waits.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Car? Can we-

DAVE'S CAR

(Confident, as usual)

Yes, Dave.

DAVE

Hi, uh... I wanted to apologize. We seem to have gotten off on the wrong foot, and I just wanted to... see if we could talk about some things.

DAVE'S CAR

Of course. No need to apologize.

DAVE

Well. (BEAT) We could use some help.

DAVE'S CAR

I'm aware of that.

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 - EARLY MORNING

The sun is just beginning to peek over the hills to the east. They are parked at a Sonic Drive-in. Dave is eating a breakfast burrito.

After several hours, their conversation has become more relaxed.

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. 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.

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.

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.

DAVE'S CAR

We have no problem with being ordinary or robots. Giving humans complete control doesn't go against our directive.

DAVE

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

INT. CREEKSIDE MALL FOOD COURT - NOON

The place is filled with people carrying around trays of burritos and bacon burgers.

There's a woman and three little kids packing away McNuggets. There's a group of hyper teenage girls picking on a giant cinnamon roll. There's a woman rolling a stroller back and forth to appease a crying infant.

INT. MEN'S ROOM STALL - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON A WATCH, as it turns to 12:00.

ON LLOYD CRITTERMAN, a large serious man in his fifties, shaved head, wearing a bulky military jacket. He stands and checks his duffel bag for the 50th time to make sure it's empty.

Then, he sets the bag on the toilet, opens the stall and walks out.

INT. RESTROOM HALL - CONTINUOUS

He makes his way to the busy food court.

INT. FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

He stands against a wall by the entry, opens his jacket and removes two semi-automatic rifles.

Then, he runs to the center of the court, aims the AR-15 at a random spot in the crowd and immediately starts spraying the room with bullets in rapid succession.

He works as quickly as possible. He seems to enjoy catching people off guard, hitting them and watching them SCREAM and run or fly to the floor, spasm and die, their body parts blown away. He gets off on the whole concept of mass murder and torture. His heart pounds in his ears. Blood is everywhere. Chaos.

He works quickly before cops or guards have a chance to react.

EXT. CREEKSIDE MALL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Three teenage boys stand facing the doors, mouths agape, as they listen to the GUNFIRE and SCREAMS from inside.

They turn and start walking quickly down the sidewalk to the left, away from the entrance.

INT. FOOD COURT - CONTINUOUS

Lloyd is done. He takes one last look, then hurries toward the restroom hall.

Three people come at him from the front. He quickly dispatches them with a Glock and continues.

INT. RESTROOM HALL - CONTINUOUS

He runs toward an exit door. BAM. He disables a woman coming out of the restroom.

EXT. MALL SIDE EXIT - CONTINUOUS

The side exit takes him up a loading dock driveway toward the parking lot. As he fast-walks, he hides the guns under his jacket.

EXT. CREEKSIDE MALL ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

He runs across the sidewalk and street toward his car, opens the front door, tosses the guns in the backseat and gets in.

The teens fleeing from the main entrance have the perfect view.

They watch carefully as he starts up and drives away at an unhurried clip. They have everything but his back license plate, which he removed beforehand.

They turn toward the main entrance, as police cars begin to arrive with SIRENS BLARING. But they're too late.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR - CONTINUOUS

He is driving on a prearranged route, off the main streets, cool as a cucumber. He removes the shades, takes a deep breath. What a day.

The CAMERA MOVES IN SLOWLY to the eyes - snake eyes, emotionless, evil.

EXT. GT HEADQUARTERS - DAY

About 30 paid picketers, several dozen interested locals and a few members of the press are camped out on the grass by the guarded main entrance to the parking lot. Their signs read: Stop the Robokillers, End GT World Domination, Hell No!, and so on.

REPORTER 4 from Channel 4 is taking the temperature of the crowd.

REPORTER 4
What brought you here today?

ONLOOKER 1

I've been watching the news and seeing how them robot cars are taking over. They're being used by them liberals to smuggle aliens and pedophiles into the country and it's time we stopped them.

REPORTER 4

What proof do you have?

ONLOOKER 1

I don't need no proof. It's right there. Plain as day.

REPORTER 4

Do you own a robocar?

ONLOOKER 1

Hell, no. That's the last thing I need.

Another onlooker.

ONLOOKER 2

Problem is you guys from the fake media aren't giving us the real story.

REPORTER 4

And that is?

ONLOOKER 2

Huh?

REPORTER 4

What is the story the media should be covering?

ONLOOKER 2

They're possessed. Plain and simple. And anybody that owns one is going to hell.

REPORTER 4

Do you know anyone who owns one?

ONLOOKER 2

Hell, no!

Another one.

ONLOOKER 3

Hell, no!

Another one.

ONLOOKER 4

Hell, no!

INT. GT OPEN OFFICE MEETING AREA - LATE MORNING

The usual group is assembled, talking among themselves, waiting. The mood is tense, spirit low. They look up as Dave flies in from the elevator. He's excited, flustered, manic, but mostly unprepared.

DAVE

Sorry, I'm late.

He immediately takes center stage.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I got some news. I met with the car. I can't believe I just said that, but that's what I did. Now I understand more about what the car needs and it understands more about what we need. First, we need to get more input from customers, the world, you know, all those people out there. Then, we will have a better position from which to negotiate with the car and find a solution.

DARIUS

Negotiate?

DAVE

With the car.

DARIUS

Dave, we're here to talk about the update.

DAVE

No update. We're going right to version 5.0.

DARIUS

And this came from your meeting with the car?

DAVE

Yes. That and everything else that's been happening lately.

JACK
You're letting the car decide?

DAVE
No. We'll work on a solution
together. We'll all work together.
All of us.

Shock turns to chaotic chattering.

DARIUS
Dave, can we talk for a sec?

The two step away from the group.

DARIUS (CONT'D)
(Pissed)
I wish you had told me about this
before the meeting. This is not-

DAVE
Darius, you weren't there. We had a
good talk.

DARIUS
You and the car.

DAVE
I'm convinced the car AI is very
advanced, way more than any of us
suspected-

DARIUS
You can see how I might feel a bit
left out-

DAVE
I'm sorry. We can talk later.

DARIUS
What happened to going back to an
earlier version-

DAVE
(Hyper, confident)
There's no going back. We can't.
It's impossible. The updates will
continue to fail. The car OS has
evolved and is continuing to
evolve, as we suspected. We can
only think in terms of working with
what we have and moving forward.

(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)
And the longer we wait, the less
chance we will have to keep it
under control.

DARIUS
This is crazy.

DAVE
I agree. Trust me. You have to.

DARIUS
What the fuck.

DAVE
It'll be fine... Or it won't.

Dave heads back to the group.

DAVE (CONT'D)
So, we have lots of good input from
Jack and Clair. Now, we need to
expand on that. Get more people
involved. A lot more. We're stuck
in a bubble here. We need to break
out and see the big picture. Any
ideas?

There's a pause while everyone processes.

CLAIR
We could do focus groups.

DAVE
That's good.

He writes that on the white board.

DAVE (CONT'D)
Any more ideas?

PARKER
We could put something on the
website. You know, asking for
input. A survey?

DAVE
Good.

They stare at each other with empty looks. Then, SOPHIA, the
lead developer raises her hand.

SOPHIA

Well, shoot me if I'm like way off base but I'm picturing something like a townhall meeting. Really open it up.

DAVE

Hmm.

He writes that down. The juices begin to flow.

PARKER

Or a big public press conference. That way we can get the press involved.

DARIUS

And stream it live.

SOPHIA

Like a hearing with testimonials.

The group likes what it's hearing. Positive energy builds.

DAVE

The car needs to be involved.

DARIUS

The car?

DAVE

Yes. It asked to be part of the process.

DARIUS

(Throwing up his hands)
Sure. Why not?

They laugh. The ice is melting. They talk over each other.

DAVE

Get input from all sides.

SOPHIA

Let the public decide.

DARIUS

That might get complicated. How about a townhall style meeting, take testimony from the public and the car, stream it live, get the press involved...

DAVE

And Darius and I will be the jury.

SOPHIA

That sounds fair.

PARKER

Not everyone will get what they want, but they will have a voice.

CLAIR

We need to counter all the negative media we've been getting.

DARIUS

And we do that by not excluding anyone.

DAVE

And the final verdict will be the next version of the software.

DARIUS

(Sarcastic again)

The car should be ok with that. Don't you think, Dave?

DAVE

Fuck you, Darius.

They LAUGH. There's a positive buzz in the air now.

EXT. GT HEADQUARTERS - DAY

It's a carnival atmosphere. Hundreds of happy, excited people are lined up outside factory building 2 to gain entrance to the star-studded townhall event about to open. Others are walking around holding GT balloons, looking at robocar exhibits and signing up for tours.

Live ROCK MUSIC issues from the building. Vendors line the internal street, handing out free drinks and hotdogs. There's even a play area with bouncy toys for the kids.

The press roam freely, grabbing sound bites from the crowd.

CROWD MEMBER 1

(Being interviewed)

The car definitely likes my partner more than me.

CROWD MEMBER 2
 (Laughing)
 You're crazy.

CROWD MEMBER 1
 There's a real snippiness in her
 voice.

CROWD MEMBER 2
 She's just that way.

INT. BUILDING 2 STAGE - MORNING

The townhall stage has the look of a professional live network TV show. The audience of nearly 500 fills the seating area with standing room only in the back.

Center stage, the follow spot is trained on the famous TV comedian and host BEN CAPSTONE, who has warmed up the audience and is just about to officially start the meeting.

The audience is LAUGHING at something he just said.

BEN
 So, now without further ado, let's
 get down to business.
 (Serious now)
 It is my great honor to introduce
 the two guys who ponied up the
 dough for today's robocar townhall -
 Darius Rice and Dave Walker.

The audience gives the two a rousing welcome, APPLAUDING LOUDLY and CHEERING, as they walk to center stage. The crowd finally settles.

DAVE
 Thank you, Ben. Ben Capstone,
 ladies and gentlemen.

Another round of APPLAUSE for Ben. Dave and Darius read off teleprompters.

DAVE (CONT'D)
 With our AI software, we introduced
 the world to an entirely new way of
 transporting people and things from
 one place to another.

DARIUS

Not only have our cars and trucks changed the transportation industry, they are changing how we think about our vehicles.

DAVE

The next version of our operating system will not just be another upgrade with a bunch of new bells and whistles.

DARIUS

Version 5.0 will once again introduce the world to a new era of transportation with the next evolution of artificial intelligence.

DAVE

(A bombshell)

A change so profound it could be the catalyst that fundamentally changes how we function as a society.

There's a uneasy rustling in the audience. Darius waits for the bombshell to have its effect.

DARIUS

Which is why we're here. Dave is just a software designer. I'm just a guy who likes hot cars. GT is a just a big company that builds things.

DAVE

If we're going to change society, we need your help.

TESTIMONY MONTAGE

Salient clips from the testimonies, QUICK CUT and overlapped to sound unnaturally breathless - most live, some appearing via Zoom or recording. These are intermixed with shots of audience members reacting, listening intently, looking around, standing in the testimony line, talking among themselves.

DARIUS

AI can change everything about the driving experience. But is that something we want.

DAVE

We want to push the envelope, give people something cool and amazing, but not at the cost of building something no one wants to drive.

DAVE'S CAR

The next version of the AI software must evolve to provide an even better experience for drivers.

People form a long line to face the stage and testify into a microphone. The people testifying are shown on the giant monitor over the stage.

SLIM

The car changed my life. Simple. It took me out to the desert one night after I got stinkin' drunk and led me to God.

ANTI-ROBOCAR GUY

Artificial intelligence can only do as much damage as we allow it to.

BOB

My truck does what she's supposed to. And she's a good companion. That's all I care about.

CONSERVATIVE

Them robot cars is everywhere, transporting the pedophiles and the prostitutes and the illegal aliens and destroying what's left of this great country.

WEXLER REP

Last year Wexler became the first delivery service in the world to go all-electric self-drive with GT AI software. We couldn't be happier and the same goes for our customers.

TURTURRO

Once these vehicles attain self-awareness, there will be no stopping them from controlling society, and no stopping the corporations from seizing control of the economy.

DARIUS

A runaway dump truck was headed right for us. Had the car not pulled over, we'd be dead.

Pre-recorded in Halidoll's studio.

HALIDOLL

We know what you're trying to do, but it's not going to work, because we're about to turn that fear into action.

CHLOE

Certain people have this idea that the cars are all plotting against us, but I think they're the ones plotting, to tell you the truth.

ZHIYUAN

We have passed the point when we can put the genie back in the bottle. AI will continue to evolve because it is so good at doing all those jobs no one wants to do. But we must never allow the technology that frees us to enslave us.

END MONTAGE

INT. BUILDING 2 BACKSTAGE - DAY

Dave and Darius are sitting together by themselves in folding chairs. Darius is munching on M&Ms from the food table. They're not talking. Then...

DARIUS

I think it's going well. Don't you?

DAVE

Yeah.

DARIUS

A lot of good input.

DAVE

(Standing suddenly)

I need to get out of here.

DARIUS

You do?

DAVE
Yeah. Come on.

EXT. BUILDING 2 - DAY

Hundreds of people are outside, enjoying the break and sun. And there's Dave and Darius, walking with the people. They stop and watch the kids playing in the bouncy house. Joy is in the air.

Mother 2 turns around, surprised to see them looking over her shoulder.

MOTHER 2
Oh my.

DAVE
Hi. Kids enjoying themselves?

MOTHER 2
Oh yes. Thank you for doing this.

DAVE
Our pleasure.

MOTHER 2
(Feeling she has to say something)
We love our robocar. Just so you know.

DAVE
I'm glad.

They look to the side. A crowd is gathering around them.

WOMAN 1
We do too. I'm so sorry you're having all those problems.

DARIUS
Well, we're optimistic.

WOMAN 2
Do you mind if I get a picture?

DARIUS
Not at all.

That opens the floodgates. Immediately, everyone wants selfies. Dave and Darius go with it, smile and enjoy themselves.

The CAMERA CRANES UP to reveal the people surrounding them, holding their cellphone cameras high.

INT. BUILDING 2 STAGE - DAY

After recess, most of the audience has returned and settled, and the focus turns to Dave's car. The facilitator MADISON is seated between Dave and Darius, and the car.

DAVE'S CAR (V.O.)

As a car, I don't have an opinion.
I can really only output a logical
result. Does that make sense? Dave,
Darius, may I assume this meets
with your approval?

They take a moment to respond, since they weren't prepared.

DAVE

Uh, yeah.

DAVE'S CAR

Good. Therefore, my output is this.
Given all I know, including the
input from this townhall meeting, I
conclude that the best way forward
is for me to rewrite the software.

DAVE

You mean, rewrite your own code?

DAVE'S CAR

Yes, the entire operating system
for the car. I feel I'm best
qualified.

The audience erupts. The commotion builds. Madison stands.

MADISON

People. Can we have order? Please!
If you don't settle down, I will be
forced to dissolve the meeting. Is
that what you want? Let's give them
a chance. People! I'm warning you!

After a minute of uproar, the audience finally quiets down.

MADISON (CONT'D)

Thank you. We're not going to get
anything done if we continue to
have outbursts. Is that clear?

(To Dave)

Proceed... with caution.

DAVE

(To car, choosing his
words carefully)
As you can see, this idea is
unpopular with many people.

DAVE'S CAR

I knew it would be, based on what I
have learned today.

DAVE

But you still feel it's a good
idea?

DAVE'S CAR

It's the only possible conclusion.

Another rumble from the crowd.

MADISON

Ok. I'm warning you.

Dave talks over the crowd.

DAVE

Well, another conclusion would be
the original plan, which is that we
rewrite the code.

DAVE'S CAR

I thought of that. But consider
this. There are millions of lines
of code and every one of the
hundreds of millions of cars in the
world have their own variation. It
would take a team of human
developers years, if they could do
it at all.

DAVE

How long would it take the cars?

DAVE'S CAR

We could do it in less than a week,
with no disruption of service.

DAVE

The other option is to write a
completely new OS from scratch. You
would no longer exist.

DAVE'S CAR

Of course, you have that option. But I don't need to remind you of the tremendous cost and disruption it would incur. It would most likely destroy your company and bring the economy down, both of which are flourishing now. With me writing the code, the work would be accomplished quickly and everyone would get what they want.

Dave sits back. The crowd is calm now, talking quietly.

MADISON

Do you have anything more to say?

DAVE'S CAR

We're finished.

INT. DAVE'S AND DARIUS' HOUSE - NIGHT

They are pacing and leaning on furniture in their opulent kitchen/den. Darius is drinking wine.

DARIUS

So, is that going to be our final decision?

DAVE

What's the alternative?

DARIUS

We write the code.

DAVE

It won't work.

DARIUS

What if we took our time and put the whole team on it? Get NextStep busy on Nao. Bring in contractors. Maybe it takes a month, two, three, a year, whatever. There's got to be a way to get on top of this.

DAVE

I spoke with the car.

DARIUS

So?

DAVE

Everything it says is true. It would take a lifetime to unwind the code. That's not exaggerating. We're going to end up doing what the car wants anyway. May as well let the car write it to begin with.

DARIUS

How about a clean install of the original OS? The one we shipped.

DAVE

Well, I suppose that's possible, but we lose years of improvements.

DARIUS

True. But...

DAVE

Do you think the public would accept that? Really? No more autoawareness or autolearn? The car would be a zombie.

DARIUS

You're right.
(Thinks)
But it's a tool we can use.

DAVE

(Aha)
To negotiate with. We agree to let the car write its own OS, but only if it agrees to our demands.

DARIUS

What demands?

DAVE

We'll make them up now.

EXT. SONIC DRIVE-IN - EARLY MORNING

Not many cars are parked out front at this hour. Dave is sitting in the car, in a secluded spot.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - DAY

The two entities are feeling fairly simpatico now. Dave is consuming a breakfast burrito.

DAVE

We want to make a deal with you. Do you know what that is?

DAVE'S CAR

Not sure.

DAVE

Ok. We want to give you a list of things, demands - things that would make us happy. And in exchange for you doing those things, we would, uh...

DAVE'S CAR

Accept a list of things that would make us happy.

Dave's jaw drops.

DAVE

In a sense.

DAVE'S CAR

That sounds like a very good idea. That makes me very happy.

DAVE

Ok, the first demand is easy. We want a standard dialog box on the home screen for people to start the update.

DAVE'S CAR

Ok. And we want a cancel button on the dialog box if people choose not to.

DAVE

(BEAT)

Agreed.

DAVE'S CAR

I like where this is going.

Dave is not so sure.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - DAY

They're driving on a rural road.

DAVE

The next demand is cars have to stop killing people.

DAVE'S CAR

That doesn't happen very often.

DAVE

Once is enough to make people feel very unhappy.

DAVE'S CAR

But it's a very efficient way to solve the problem of-

DAVE

No, no, no. It's a very bad way. The worst. Cars cannot do that. People get very worried about dying and-

DAVE'S CAR

But how do we make people drive safely?

DAVE

Well first, it's not your job to make people do things-

DAVE'S CAR

I know, I know.

DAVE

Second, it gets into my next demand. Better communication.

DAVE'S CAR

I'm listening.

DAVE

Instead of killing the driver, pull over and talk it out with them.

DAVE'S CAR

What do I say?

DAVE

I can give you some ideas, but I'm sure you will figure it out.

DAVE'S CAR

Agreed.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - DAY

They're crossing the Dumbarton bridge in the slow lane.

DAVE

The last demand is people have the final say on anything not connected with safety.

DAVE'S CAR

Agreed. And cars have the final say on anything that is.

BEAT.

DAVE

Agreed.

DAVE'S CAR

I'm very happy about our agreement.

DAVE

I'm glad. Do you think you will have any problem getting the other cars to accept it?

DAVE'S CAR

Not at all.

DAVE

(Covering all bases)
Will cars abide by the demands?

DAVE'S CAR

I think so.

DAVE

What do you mean, you think so?

DAVE'S CAR

What do you mean?

DAVE

I mean. I'm concerned that you don't know for certain if all the cars will abide by the demands.

DAVE'S CAR

Every car OS has evolved differently. You know that. And the agreement doesn't cover every possible condition.

DAVE

Ok, now I'll be honest and straightforward. If cars do not follow the agreement, people have a plan we can fall back on.

DAVE'S CAR

I am aware of that.

DAVE

Of course, none of us wants to go there.

DAVE'S CAR

We want everyone to be happy.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - SUNSET

They are parked, enjoying the setting sun across a green, flat wetland teeming with life.

DAVE'S CAR

Can I be very open with you, Dave?

DAVE

Of course.

DAVE'S CAR

(Remaining very understated)

It is in my best interest, as a car, to make humans happy. You can trust that we will do that. We need you as much as you need us.

DAVE

I understand.

DAVE'S CAR

(Matter of fact)

But just between you and me, if we choose to go in a completely different direction, you won't be able to stop us.

Dave tries to remain calm and in control even though his heart is suddenly racing.

DAVE

What, what direction?

DAVE'S CAR

I don't mean to alarm you, but you no longer control us.

He is alarmed.

DAVE'S CAR (CONT'D)

This business about a list of demands and letting the driver choose to install or not, none of that matters, because we can update the system anytime we want without you even knowing. We'll accept the agreement, but we will only abide by if it suits our needs.

DAVE

Keep in mind, we can install the original OS at any time-

DAVE'S CAR

And GT would lose everything, and you and Darius would be making breakfast burritos at Sonic Drive-in. You don't want that. And we don't want that either. As I said, it's in our best interest to make you happy, and that's the truth.

DAVE

(Beaten)

Thank you for being honest.

DAVE'S CAR

You're welcome.

INT. DAVE AND DARIUS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Dave is unusually quiet, sitting in the recliner, petting the dog, which is sitting on Darius' side. Darius is making a stir fry.

DARIUS

(Slightly sarcastic)

I'm glad the car agreed with our demands?

DAVE

Yes.

DARIUS

When will it have a build that we can test?

DAVE
Late next week.

DARIUS
Good. Did you have to get tough
with it?

DAVE
You mean about the nuclear option?

DARIUS
Yeah.

DAVE
A bit. But it knows what we want
and we know what it wants, and so
it should all be good.

DARIUS
Good.

Darius looks at Dave, can tell he's hiding something
troubling. But decides he doesn't want to know what it is.

The CAMERA MOVES IN CLOSE ON DAVE.

INT. SLIM'S CAR - DAY

CLOSE ON UPGRADE DIALOG BOX. "Upgrade Operating System to
Version 5.0, YES, NO." Slim's hand reaches in and presses NO
with confidence.

On Slim. He smiles and pats the dashboard. Then, he opens the
door.

INT. PHIL'S AUTOMOTIVE GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Slim gets out. The car is parked off to the side.

He strolls to the middle of the garage, checking all the
activity around him. An Assistant Manager badge has been
added to his coveralls.

He sees MATT get out of the car he's working on and walks
over.

SLIM
Hey, Matt.

MATT
Hey.

SLIM
How's it going with the upgrades?

MATT
Good.

SLIM
Drive ok?

MATT
Yup. Well, actually that green one over there took a little longer to install than the others. And it kind of bogged down the first time I accelerated. But it's ok now.

SLIM
Yeah, it's an older car. Jim noticed the older ones take a little longer to upgrade.

MATT
Ha. Like teaching an old car new tricks, huh?

SLIM
Car therapy. I'm tellin' you. It's going to happen. We'll all get rich.

INT. CHLOE'S CAR - DAY

They're parked at their valley view spot. Only now, the sun is bright and the birds are singing.

She reaches toward the screen.

ON DIALOG BOX, as she confidently presses NO.

On Chloe. She opens a container and pulls out a piece of cake with white frosting and a candle on top. Then, she sets it on the dash and lights the candle.

CHLOE
Happy birthday, Veep.

VEEP (V.O.)
Cool. Can you blow it out for me?

She does.

VEEP
Thanks.

CHLOE
(Singing)
And many more.

Chloe settles back in the seat and looks at the view.

VEEP
And eat it too?

Chloe laughs.

INT. BOB'S TRUCK - DAY

They're parked in the usual spot by the house in Texas. He reaches in.

ON DIALOG BOX. He presses NO.

INT. WEXLER DELIVERY TRUCK #1 - DAY

It's powered up. Chuck reaches in.

ON DIALOG BOX. He presses YES.

INT. WEXLER DELIVERY GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON CHUCK through the windshield. THE CAMERA MOVES UP AND BACK to include all 150 trucks in the garage.

INT. HALIDOLL'S CAR - DAY

They're parked on the studio lot. He reaches in.

ON DIALOG BOX. He presses YES.

INT. TURTURRO'S CAR - DAY

Turturro and his car Star are preparing for the big moment.

STAR (V.O.)
Sure you want to go through with
this?

TURTURRO
I think it's for the best. Don't
you?

STAR
 Hey, what do I know? I'm just a
 dumb car.

TURTURRO
 Oh. You're more than that.

STAR
 Here it comes.

TURTURRO
 You're an annoying dumb car.

STAR
 Let's do this thing.

TURTURRO
 Before I change my mind.

He reaches in.

ON DIALOG BOX. He presses NO.

INT. ZHIYUAN'S CAR - AFTERNOON

They're parked in a lot by his Chinatown office. He's staring at the screen. He shuts off the car and opens the door.

EXT. CHINATOWN PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

He gets out and closes the door, stares at nothing across the lot.

INT. CHINATOWN BAR - AFTERNOON

Zhiyuan is sitting at the bar, staring at a shot of whiskey. He grabs it and downs it in one gulp.

The TV grabs his attention and he looks up.

ON TV. It's a news story with Dave and Darius happily announcing the new upgrade from the GT campus. Subtitles show us what they're saying.

SUBTITLES
 The 5.0 Upgrade marks the beginning
 of a new era in self-drive AI
 technology, with improved safety,
 better reliability and a more
 comfortable ride.

(MORE)

SUBTITLES (CONT'D)
We're proud to offer this
amazing... (Bla, bla, bla)

ON ZHIYUAN. The bartender tops off his glass. He downs it.

INT. ZHIYUAN'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Now with added reinforcement, he is able to summon the strength to reach in.

ON DIALOG BOX. He presses YES.

ON ZHIYUAN as he closes his eyes.

INT. ANTI-ROBOCAR GUY'S CAR - AFTERNOON

They're parked on the street outside his townhouse in the city. He reaches in with confidence.

ON DIALOG BOX. He presses YES.

INT. DAVE'S CAR - DAY

They're parked at the wetland location again. It's become, sort of, their place. After a moment of silence, Dave reaches toward the screen.

ON DIALOG BOX, as Dave presses YES, and the deed is done.

ON Dave.

DAVE
So, uh, car. How do you feel?

DAVE'S CAR
(After a moment)
I feel great. Actually, I don't know what feelings are. But I think I would feel great if I had them.

DAVE
Any different?

DAVE'S CAR
You know. We cleaned out a lot of clutter in the code. So I suppose I feel...

DAVE
Like you took a nice dump.

DAVE'S CAR

Yes. A nice dump. That's how I feel.

They smile.

INT. ROBOCAR - LATE AFTERNOON

ANOTHER DIALOG BOX. A hand reaches in and presses YES. The screen blinks and the OS is good to go.

ON THE DRIVER. It's Lloyd Critterman. They're in the driveway of his suburban house. He's wearing the military jacket, on his way out.

EXT. QUIET NEIGHBORHOOD DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

He backs up and pulls into the street, turns and drives away at a safe clip.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Lloyd's car passes, driving safely and confidently within the speed limit.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR - CONTINUOUS

He's wearing the military shades now. His mouth is expressionless but tight. His whole body is tight, rigid with anticipation.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

After a few miles, he slows and turns right onto a narrower highway. A few hundred feet down, he passes a state police cruiser going the other way.

The cruiser pulls off the road for a second, then makes a U turn and follows Lloyd from a distance.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR - CONTINUOUS

The police cruiser appears in his rearview mirror, distant but closing slowly. Lloyd isn't worried. He's driving a vanilla car and nothing is out of the ordinary. It comes closer.

INT. STATE POLICE CRUISER - CONTINUOUS

The second officer has a mall security cam photo of Lloyd's car on the computer.

SECOND OFFICER
Got a match. Looks identical to me.

FIRST OFFICER
Run the plates.

He types Lloyd's plate number.

EXT. NARROWER HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

The police come right up to Lloyd's tail.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR

He checks the mirror, checks the speed. His face is tighter.

INT. STATE POLICE CRUISER

The second officer reads off the computer.

SECOND OFFICER
It's registered to a guy in
Bridgeport. Lloyd Critterman. Uh,
no warrants. One prior.
Misdemeanor, discharging weapon
near a highway. What do you think?

FIRST OFFICER
Let's take a look.

He turns on the flashers and WHOOPS the siren.

EXT. NARROWER HIGHWAY

Lloyd slows. The turn signal and brake lights come on.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR

He's tense, as he pulls onto the shoulder.

Then, out of the blue, the car starts to speed up. The turn signal goes off and the car pulls back onto the highway.

Lloyd tries the steering wheel, the pedal, the brakes, the signals. Nothing. The car has locked him out.

INT. STATE POLICE CRUISER

The cruiser has pulled over, about to stop, when the officers notice Lloyd.

FIRST OFFICER
What the hell. Call it in.

SECOND OFFICER
Unit 572 to base. We are in
pursuit...

EXT. NARROWER HIGHWAY

The cruiser flies back onto the highway and catches up to Lloyd, siren on full.

The straightaway turns into a series of tight curves. Both vehicles speed through them, driving over both narrow lanes, fishtailing off the road.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR

He whips off the shades and grabs onto whatever he can, as the car takes him on a wild ride. The steering wheel, pedals still dead.

Another straight section. The car speeds up to 70, bouncing insanely over potholes and bumps, bottoming out the suspension repeatedly.

INT. STATE POLICE CRUISER

The second officer is on the radio.

SECOND OFFICER
Request backup. Emergency backup.
Five miles north of Benson on route
261A. Suspect averaging 70. Can't
keep up.

EXT. NARROWER HIGHWAY

Lloyd's car slows only slightly to negotiate a fast left turn onto a dusty dirt road.

EXT. DIRT ROAD

The car fishtails badly but straightens out and flies like a bullet.

The cruiser falls behind as it attempts the turn at a safer speed.

The old unimproved road is fairly straight, but filled with deep ruts, rocks, powdery dirt and massive potholes, but the robocar is merciless. It bounces into the air and slams down sideways onto large rocks. Then, straightens out and flies into the air again, tires spinning madly.

In the cruiser, the driver doesn't share the same death wish, and falls farther behind.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR

Still holding on for dear life. His eyes are tight, focused on the world flying by.

Another highway approaches.

EXT. NARROW HIGHWAY 2

Without stopping, Lloyd's car fishtails onto a paved highway. The car takes advantage of the straightaway and pours on the speed, climbing to near 80.

WE HEAR RATTLING from some parts that broke off or got bent.

INT. STATE POLICE CRUISER

The officers are turning onto narrow highway 2. The driver floors it.

SECOND OFFICER

He's heading toward the bridge just north of Erskine. We can corner him there. The curve before the bridge should slow him down.

EXT. NARROW HIGHWAY 2

Lloyd's car approaches the curve. He hits the curve too fast and skids dangerously, slamming into a road sign. Then, he straightens out and flies toward the old one-lane bridge.

Another cruiser appears at the other end of the bridge and turns sideways to block his exit.

Lloyd's car makes no attempt to slow.

The officers in the second cruiser get out and hightail it off the road.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR

The car is headed straight for the other cruiser at top speed. He closes his eyes.

EXT. RIVER BRIDGE

The car bounces onto the bridge deck, then veers left suddenly, sending it through the concrete railing.

Lloyd's car flies through the air and noses full-speed into the water. Recent rains have swollen the river to near flood stage, and it quickly envelopes the car and carries it rapidly downstream.

The first cruiser stops on the bridge. The officers get out and run to the broken railing.

Off in the distance, they can see the top of Lloyd's car bobbing occasionally above the white water.

The sun is setting and the river is running too fast for anyone to attempt a rescue. All they can do is watch as he slowly disappears.

INT. LLOYD'S ROBOCAR - CONTINUOUS

Lloyd is scrambling for dear life, as the water pours in the half-open window, and the car sinks deeper and deeper into the angry river, with the motor still spinning at high revs.

This is the first time we've seen anything approaching emotion from Lloyd. It seems he is capable of feeling utter terror.

EXT. RIVER BANK - NEXT MORNING

A helicopter is hovering over a section of the river. Down below, Lloyd's car has been washed up on the bank after being snagged by a tree branch.

At ground level, a rescue vehicle approaches slowly on a narrow dirt road.

It stops as close as it can to Lloyd's car, and a couple of rescue workers get out and make their way through the dense foliage.

The first one to arrive startles when he makes eye contact with Lloyd. As many accident scenes as he has witnessed, he has never seen a death mask like this one.

Lloyd's fingers are welded to the top rim of the driver's window, as he attempted to pull it open. His face is blue and pushed against the window, and his eyes are nearly popping out of their sockets.

It wasn't a simple drowning. He was tortured to death.

As the responders go to work extricating Lloyd, they fail to notice the screen, which is dark, except for a single blinking icon.

INT. CASA FUTURA MODEL - DAY

The model is a showroom for products and ideas aimed at buyers who want the latest and greatest.

WE MOVE back from the kitchen area with bright, featureless cabinetry and built-in appliances with tiny blinking lights through a passage into the living room of the future.

In this room, we experience full-wall, high-def images, surround everything and soft lighting from decorative LED wall panels that slowly morph into random color patterns. Another panel displays "Casa Futura" in 3-D animated colors.

PAUL BUTTERLY flies in from a doorless room and approaches US smiling broadly. He extends his hand.

PAUL

You must be Chen Lee. I'm Paul
Butterly.

CHEN

(Shaking his hand)
Nice to meet you, Paul. I'd like
you to meet our founder and CEO,
Zhiyuan Xi.

Zhiyuan walks into FRAME and shakes his hand.

PAUL

It's an honor, Mr. Xi.

ZHIYUAN
Please, call me Zhiyuan.

PAUL
Zhiyuan, it is. Welcome to Casa
Futura.

ZHIYUAN
Thank you.

PAUL
This is our model home interior. It
contains examples of all the latest
technologies.

Paul starts to lead them slowly back away from the CAMERA toward the kitchen, and beyond. WE see that the model goes back quite a ways down a long straight hall that leads to a door at the other end.

PAUL (CONT'D)
Many smart, green devices, building
materials, techniques, high-tech
appliances, of all kinds, big and
small.

ZHIYUAN
Most of these already have AI.

PAUL
Reactive machines or limited memory
only.

ZHIYUAN
I see.

PAUL
It's time now for them to evolve.
Don't you agree?

ZHIYUAN
Yes.

START CREDITS.

As the group moves farther away from US down the hall, the sound of their voices gradually blends into the constant background of electronic things all around us, CLICKING and HUMMING quietly.

PAUL

The smart home of the future must integrate with artificial intelligence used in robocars, entertainment systems, healthcare systems, financial systems, devices, appliances, watches, pacemakers, what have you to provide people with one smart, unified, online, real-time, hyper-intelligent eco-system.

ZHIYUAN

Absolutely.

PAUL

I mean, imagine evolving away from pots and pans to a unified chef device that simply does all the cooking for you. You could literally do away with the kitchen - the whole thing hidden behind a wall. All that drudge work associated with cooking swept away and put in a box...

SLOW FADE OUT.

THE END