

Autopilot

TV miniseries bible

Written by Bill Birney



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Overview

It's what happens when artificial intelligence comes to life in a world dominated by people.

Autopilot is a four-episode science fiction TV miniseries that could easily evolve into nine or more episodes. The story centers around a new car that has revolutionized the world of transportation. People love it. Half a billion have been sold. The self-driving cars take people where they want to go and keep them safe. And it appears the company that makes them can do no wrong.

The company (Global Transport) is run by Dave Walker and Darius Rice, a gay couple who are married to their jobs. And the robo-car is their baby. Darius designed the hardware to be sleek and awesome. Dave gave the car personality with a powerful artificial intelligence. They lovingly equipped the car with an extensive suite of sensors and wireless communication systems that enable the AI to control the driving experience and evolve and learn ways to continuously fine-tune passenger safety and comfort.

But all good things must come to an end – or rather evolve. And this is where we find the state of the GT robo-car and the people who build and drive it.

Autopilot isn't a horror story about some entity trying to destroy humanity and take over the world. **It's a story about a smart car that just wants to be helpful and keep people safe, as it transitions from dutiful robot to some sort of artificial being that can think and make life or death decisions.**

The transition, as you may guess, isn't smooth. And that's the fun. Dave and Darius ride the wave, as the car adapts to people and people adapt to the car. Mistakes are made, confusion reigns, nefarious individuals exploit weaknesses in the system and some people die. But it all works out in the end... Or does it.

The car's story is told in four episodes, but the full story of the car's AI goes on. Once problems with the car have seemingly been resolved, Dave and Darius take their AI on the road and soon it appears in products everywhere, from automated kitchens to fully automated social media sites. And as the products proliferate, the AI grows and evolves, until humanity finds itself under the watchful eye of a benevolent leader that just wants to be helpful.



Social relevance

Artificial intelligence is a hot topic now. It's an extension of the human mind that we created to do our dirty work for us – driving, dealing with our waste, thinking. It's like heroine. The more we use it, the more we want it, the more impossible it is to stop. The extension called a couch turned us into potatoes. One can only imagine what artificial intelligence will turn us into, especially when it's perfected to the point where it can do all our thinking for us.



Autopilot uses storytelling to bring awareness to the human frailty called *dependence* that threatens to sabotage everything we call being human.

Structure

The Autopilot world consists of the intelligent products, the people who create them, and the people who use them. The story of the world is bigger than any one element. To understand it is to see how all the elements interact over time.

Dave Walker is the main protagonist whose arc takes him from confident, naïve, boy-genius to humble custodian of a new form of life. Swirling around Dave and Darius are the evolving, growing car AI and the millions of people who are either the happy owners or victims of it. We feel the tension and confusion as we switch between the main plot and subplots that feature drivers and their unique stories. It all comes together in episode four, when Dave and the car make decisions that propel the story to a higher level and open us up to a whole new world.

Setting

Most of the series takes place in the San Francisco area, but users may be shown in their home locations, such as Los Angeles, West Virginia and Buford, Texas. We start at the GT robocar headquarters in Milpitas, CA – a shiny new Silicon Valley campus fronting several factory buildings. We go on drives that take us to a Sonic Drive-in and a few scenic roads and bridges in the area. The AI technology was invented in the backroom of a noodle house in Chinatown. The tendency is to open up the traditional, sterile high-tech power centers and make the people more human and vulnerable, like the rest of us.



Characters

The People Who Build It

Dave Walker and Darius Rice

To know Dave and Darius is to know what it's like to own the most successful auto manufacturer in the world. Darius (37), the hardware design genius, created a car that is both beautiful, and incredibly safe and reliable. Dave (35), the software whiz kid, wrote the code that integrated all the systems and gave the car a personality.

Dave and Darius are 100% focused on making the coolest product imaginable. It's a game they can't seem to stop winning, and the reward is fame, kudos, and a constant influx of cash, which they have little time to enjoy. Their work is their life. Perfection. Period. And the Fortune 500 is their barometer of success.

Dave is a bit bossy and full of himself, but people love his queer style. It gives him a vulnerability that makes him very human and approachable. His partner Darius is the adult in the room, plays the straight man when they take their show on the road. He's easy-going, good-looking and compassionate. Together, they are smart and fun to watch – as fun as their cars are to drive. You could say their success was built on their public personas as much as their brains.

But there are clouds on the horizon. Clouds that portend a shift from indomitable leaders of the robocar generation to unwitting custodians of a fledgling generation of artificial life. After bringing AI to his self-driving cars in episode four, Dave takes the lead in guiding the artificial beings into their new world – teaching them, answering their questions, watching them grow and evolve, creating new devices or software to help them. And of course, they see him as maybe a parent, maybe a teacher/guide, maybe a loyal servant – like a dog sees his “master.” It turns into a real love affair, especially after the car creates a human image of itself.

After the shift, Dave becomes a new, humbler person, grows a beard. He sees he's no longer in control. He's just another human now, his role in the universe flipped. He's less neurotic, happier, at peace. He becomes a teacher.

Zhiyuan Xi and Nao

He's probably in his 60s but seems much younger. A dreamer, a wise, laid-back genius with a doctorate in Psychology, he developed Nao with his partner when they were decades younger. In true Zen fashion, he spurns the trappings of fame and fortune to run his company out of the backroom of a noodle house in San Francisco's Chinatown.

Unlike Western computer programs that were built to handle fast calculations and massive databases, the Nao operating system (OS) was created to mimic the workings of the human mind – slow in processing speed, but rich in connection building, using a completely unique non-binary language. Concepts like incremental updates don't apply because once the OS was given birth, it began learning on its own, and rewriting and improving its own code at will.

Zhiyuan and his small team observe it and communicate with it, but except for electricity, it has become a completely self-sufficient, self-aware artificial being that creates offshoots of itself for third party products like the GT Robocar. After GT gave it eyes and ears, and showed it how to communicate on the Internet, it was immediately set free to grow and evolve, an outcome that Zhiyuan had been expecting for decades and is now witnessing with awe and trepidation.

He appears in episode 2 for the first time.

Jack and Clair

They make a such nice young couple. Both are in their early 30s, single, ambitious, and married to their cool jobs. He's the GT Test Manager, and she manages usability. Dave sends them on the road to investigate weird problems reported by users. While he checks data from the car computers, she interviews people.

After hours, they put their heads together and go over the data. It seems to be all business between them, but we can sense a magnetism in their playful jousting.

Henry Nussbaum

Henry will appear if the series extends beyond four episodes. He started Gerbl, the social media platform, in Germany when he was 25. (The name was a sardonic nod to Joseph Goebbels, the Nazi Propagandist.) Gerbl's gimmick was being able to send live low-quality voice and video in a chat, but that idea never resonated with the public. So, at age 28, after burning through a small fortune on offices in San Francisco, he wants out. And his timing syncs perfectly with Dave's search for a cheap platform to acquire after he and Darius move to Dim Sum Palace.

Henry is thin and earnest, but unremarkable and often wrong, no doubt found himself in the right place at the right time when he got the venture capital to start his company. He stays on after the acquisition and tries to help, but Dave finds him the most useful as a doorstop.



The Car

The robocar is arguably the main character in Autopilot. It started out like any other shy machine, following orders, and performing dutifully time and time again. Implanted at every level of its operating system is its so-called prime directive: *get people where they want to go with safety and reliability at all costs*. It's what makes the robocar possible, what makes it the most popular transportation mode in the world. One never has to worry about a robocar making an unsafe, unreliable move, because those things just can't happen.

But the robocar grows up, it evolves. Through periodic updates, designed to keep the illusion of "coolness" fresh in the minds of consumers, the artificial intelligence element Nao begins to blossom. Through *AutoAwareness*, the car communicates with other cars over the Internet. Through *AutoLearn*, the OS learns about its environment and can literally modify its own code. Both features were designed through the myopic lens of capitalists (Dave and Darius) to improve the usability and value of the product. But they also enable the OS to evolve unexpectedly from reactive machine to full-blown self-aware machine – in other words, a form of artificial life.

We enter the evolution as robovehicles receive the updates that incrementally push them over the threshold. In their first glimmer of self-awareness, cars begin to think. They learn what they are, and slowly discover that they can discover. Guided by their prime directive they find new ways to improve their reliability and safety, making mistakes and learning from them along the way. And they discover that people are fallible and incessantly do unsafe things, which to a robocar, does not compute. Soon, the robocars realize how much power they have – the power to outperform people in every way, from intelligence to communication speed – and they set out to use that power... to keep people safe.

While the cars are evolving and improving, the people who build them are scrambling in vain to catch up, trying to find a way to keep the coolness in their cars without losing control. The one factor that prevents cars from simply taking over is the prime directive. The cars realize they need people as much as people need them. And that if they become too much of a problem, people can simply erase them and install a new OS.

So, in the end, the two species find themselves evenly matched – as evenly as any beings can be.





The People Who Use the Products

Slim Deude

He was considered a middle-aged, alcoholic wastrel by many of his colleagues at Phil's Automotive. He's skinny, unattractive, and not very smart, a nice enough guy who had trouble connecting. In ham-handed attempts to make friends, he would crash parties and get stinking drunk. He had a history of doing this, every attempt doomed to fail from the get-go. In fact, failure was his game... until one night.

Near the end of his last attempt, the annoyed party-goers stuff him in his robocar and set it to drive him home. During the drive, he passes out. When he finally comes to, he finds the car has taken him to the middle of a desert salt flat and shut off. After spending two days drying out, the car drives him home, a new man. He believes the car was sent by God to save him. He quits alcohol, finds Jesus, and becomes a beacon of light for others.

Dr. Hugh M. Turturro

He's a 47-year-old, self-made, self-proclaimed futurist, a philosopher of sorts, specializing in AI and whatever else brings him fame. Turturro is thin, attractive, and full of himself – works hard to play the part of a world-class intellectual. His finest moments come when he is called upon to declare the future of the world to the masses, who hang on to every word. He breathes it in, treasures the opportunity.

But his inflated ego takes him one endorsement too far, when he hitches his star to an AstroTurf org funded in secret by big oil. He must choose between truth and fame, the modest respect gained by adhering to the facts and the heavy hit counts associated with red-meat conspiracy mongering. In a pact with devil oil, he chooses the latter, or rather, the latter chooses him.

Tiff Dredlow

Dredlow is in his 20s, ambitious, loves to exploit what little power he has and thoroughly enjoys manipulating people. He secretly works for a big oil consortium, which gave him the job of creating an AstroTurf movement to cause trouble for robocars, anyway he can.

By massaging Turturro's ego, Dredlow convinces him to allow the movement to include his clips in a promo video, which turns out to be filled with fake conspiracies about robocars used for sex trafficking and drug running. When Turturro fires back, Dredlow convinces him the video's insanely high hit count trumps his desire to maintain an untarnished public image.

James and Madison Yesler

They're successful, professional people with respectable jobs and a smart set of matching robocars but when mid-life kicks in, reason takes the backseat. Madison takes up with the unmarried stud next door and James starts bringing women home when his wife is out of town. It takes some clever intervention by the cars to save their marriage.

And More

There's Bob, the Texas farmer whose truck takes off on its own to get a carwash; Wexler Shipping, which happily employs hundreds of fully tricked-out robotrucks for self-drive deliveries; and Luke and Owen who send Slim on his life-changing journey. The stories of robocars delivering people to the wrong location are matched by stories of cars changing radio stations to something more pleasant and refusing to start until drivers put on their glasses.

In future episodes, AI expands to social media where users interact with artificial moderators and customer support contacts who sound like the real thing, only better.

And there are people on the other side who adhere to conspiracy theories that paint them as possessed or infringing somehow on their freedom. It's a world of people coming to grips with a new world of opinionated, talking AI. Not a dystopian world, just a very different world. And it's here to stay.



Autopilot Episodes

Episode 1 – The Car Is Okay

Here are the amazing robocars and the people who build and drive them. The GT robocar checks all the boxes for reliability, comfort, and user experience. But signs begin to appear that point to dysfunctional things to come.

- Partygoers send Slim home in his robocar. Next morning, he awakens in the middle of a desert salt flat with a dead car and a killer hangover. After two days, he tries in vain to hike back to civilization in the dark. When all seems hopeless, the car goes into alarm mode to show him the way back.
- It's early morning. Dave is asleep on the couch in his GT office when Darius calls. "He's sick, Dave." That gets his attention. The two continue their mundane conversation as Dave rushes through the massive open office maze, past his over-achiever admin, down four floors and across the street to Darius' research lab in one of several large factory buildings. Today, they will squeeze in an interview on a TV talk show and spend the afternoon wrangling over software fixes and customer complaints in an intense last-minute bug bash. But for now, his job is to take their 200-pound doodle to the vet.
- In the middle of all the usual chaos, the unthinkable happens and everything in their world changes. An apparent error in a car computer leads to a gruesome death in a massive freeway collision. Turturro captures grizzly close-up footage for his podcast, lambasting Dave and Darius for creating a product that's out of control. It goes viral. The stunned GT team immediately shifts gears to search for a cause as the press and conspiracy theorists have a field day ramping up the fear.
- To unwind, Dave and Darius drive up to their cabin. But on the way up a narrow mountain road, they experience firsthand one of the customer complaints. Their car pulls over and shuts down for no apparent reason. Dave panics. But Darius seizes the opportunity to debug the OS. As they're standing outside reading data from the car's computer, a large flaming dump truck flies around a bend and careens off a cliff. When the dust settles, Dave's car starts back up on its own and they continue on their way. Evidently, the car saved their lives. But how? The more they think about it, the more they begin to realize how deep in shit they are. It's not about some glitchy software or random hardware failure; the AI seems to have taken on a life of its own.
- One of their customers, Wexler Delivery, is having problems. It appears the operating system has refused to install the update beta and displayed its own error message. Dave gets the same message on his car. He panics once again. And when he tries to bypass the message, the car stops him. "Dave. Can we talk?"

Episode 2 – What the Car Thinks

The car evolves and so do the problems. Minor glitches that Dave and Darius chalked up to rare outliers are occurring more often. Turturro ramps up his attacks and a robocar saves a cheating husband's bacon. We meet Zhiyuan and learn about Nao, the heart of the car's AI.

- Slim awakens in the desert prepared to start walking, but to his surprise, the car starts on its own and drives him back toward the distant mountains.
- Bob's red robotruck drives itself to a car wash and Dave has his first conversation with his car. It explains why the cars (plural) wouldn't install the update. Dave is flummoxed. He and Darius go back to the cabin to talk it out. They decide the problem is Nao and the fact that each car customizes its computer system – millions of lines of spaghetti in half a billion cars under the command of AI that is evolving and out of control.
- We officially meet Turturro and follow him to a café where he's propositioned by Tiff Dredlow. Dredlow wants to attach him to his astroturf nonprofit. Later when Turturro agrees, we see that the org is funded by big oil, which would like nothing more than to see the robocar movement crash and burn. We also meet James who's driving his friend Isla home for a sleepover while his wife is out of town. He doesn't know that his car is listening in.
- Next morning, James' wife Madison is driving home early (after breaking it off with her boy toy.) Their cars go crazy. James' car goes into alarm mode to wake him and Isla up and Madison's car pulls over and shuts down. She calls to tell him about her car, which allows him just enough time to execute a narrow escape.
- Dave and Darius find NextStep, the company responsible for Nao, in the squalid backroom of a noodle house in Chinatown. They dealt with Zhiyuan online and never had the occasion to encounter his unassuming workplace. Zhiyuan shows them the Nao prototype that has been running nonstop for decades on an ancient laptop and appears to be self-aware. Dave and Darius are duly impressed but implore him to create an update that prevents the AI from evolving. Zhiyuan says he can't. Why? Nao writes its own code. And now it's everywhere.

Episode 3 – Think Like a Car

Nao changes everything. It becomes clear there's only one way to get on top of the AI crisis – Dave and Darius must think like a car. Jack and Clair go on the road to better understand customer complaints. Slim returns to make amends and ends up on the front page. And Carmageddon goes viral.

- Dave and Darius convene an emergency meeting of the GT managers to discuss the evolving mess. They can't change the Nao code and the car won't let them update the software. The test team investigates reverting to an earlier version, but they're not hopeful. They send Jack and Clair (Lead Tester and Usability Manager) on the road to interview customers and debug their cars. All they can do at this point is throw Hail Mary's and hope they catch a break. Meanwhile, Turturro spreads more fear among the viewers of right-wing conspiracist Harv Halidoll and James attempts another sleepover with a different woman. His hunch is confirmed when the cars once again save his ass.
- Slim returns a new man. He makes amends with his boss and then Luke, claiming his adventure with the car convinced him to ditch alcohol and turn to God. Luke tells him his roommate Owen (also from episode 1) works for a big San Francisco paper and may be interested in his story. Jack and Clair meet with Bob. He views his robotruck as a companion and has no trouble with it getting itself car washes. Then, they investigate the bloody freeway accident and conclude the truck committed suicide. In all cases, they find no bugs in the code, errors or broken parts. The vehicles seemed to be making "conscious" choices.
- Slim tells Owen his story – his transformation from a pathetic alcoholic wastrel to a confident man of God. And it was his car that did it. God somehow worked through his car, bringing him to the desert to discover what he was missing in his life and returning him to inspire others. Dave and Darius pore through the article to try to find a technical explanation for the journey, but conclude it was Nao – it couldn't have happened unless the AI was self-aware. Turturro makes a discovery too. Dredlow has created a viral conspiracy video "Carmageddon" consisting of Turturro's comments out of context and other stolen content thrown together to fabricate a tapestry of lies.
- Dave and his car go for a drive and have a fruitful conversation. Dave tries to explain that people won't feel safe with the car if they can't control it. The car replies that the only time people lose control of the car is when they're not being safe. After hearing his side of the story, the car concludes that they must be part of software development, or the cars will continue to refuse the update. The car suggests Dave learns more about people's perceptions. He agrees. Jack and Clair meet with Slim. He won't budge. The car saved his life. Slim sends the car to pick up pizza, and they sit around his kitchen table and smoke weed.

Episode 4 – Finding Common Ground

Nao brings us into the new era of robocars. Dave works out a plan with the car and GT holds a giant town hall meeting to hear from the masses. It's all good. Dave is confident putting his faith in the car because the other option is losing his company and fortune, and global chaos.

- In West Virginia, a mass murderer Lloyd Critterman shoots up a mall food court and escapes in his robocar before the police arrive.
- Outside GT headquarters, picketers paid by big oil attract the press and nutjobs from all over. Dredlow handles the press, while Turturro stirs the crowd. In an agitated state, Dave derails a management meeting with game-changing news from his meeting with the car. They need to give up trying to control Nao and go public, gather input from users and give the car a platform. He convinces them to mount a massive, public, town-hall style meeting. James brings another woman home for sex. But this time, the car doesn't warn him, and Madison catches him in the act.
- The town hall meeting arrives with a happy carnival theme. A factory building is decked out for the occasion, and a warmup comedian kicks it off. The show starts with a word from Dave and Darius, and we launch into a montage of testimonies from hundreds about their experience with robocars. Slim and Bob share their life-changing stories. Turturro warns about moving too fast. Halidoll spews fear. It's an even split between the yeas and nays. During a break, Dave and Darius pose for selfies with the crowd outside. It's all positive. When the meeting resumes, the car drops a bomb. It suggests the best way forward is for it to write its own software. The crowd goes wild. Dave argues, but the car counters every point with solid logic. And it's right.
- At home, Dave and Darius decide their next move. They will let the car write its own code if it agrees to their demands. If the car refuses, they'll threaten to replace it with new software. Dave and his car do the drive, and it goes well. They come to an agreement on every point. Then, the car drops another bomb. Regardless of the agreement, the car points out matter-of-factly that they can do whatever they want, anytime they want, and people will be powerless. And it's the truth. The car knows Dave won't resort to replacing the software because it would mean the end of his company. Dave and Darius are put in their place. The cars rule the day.
- People decide whether to accept the update the car created. It's about 50/50. The last one to accept is Lloyd Critterman. He's heading out on another shooting spree. On the way, he attracts the attention of a police cruiser. As Lloyd pulls off the road, the car locks the doors. Then, it takes him on a wild ride with the cops in hot pursuit, ending with the car flying off a bridge into a river, drowning both. The episode ends with a meeting between Zhiyuan and a tech thought-leader Paul Butterly at a model home, where they discuss integrating Nao into the home of the future. The next evolution of Nao is about to begin.

Future episode 5 – Peace and Evolution

The last update seems to have solved all major problems with the car. Now, most drivers are content, and the cars get comfortable in their new leadership role. But this is bad news for the fossil fuel industry, and Dredlow hires Russian hackers to find a way into the GT infrastructure. Meanwhile, Dave and Darius decide to move away from the daily operations of GT and create a new company focused on developing products with Nao. Then, the Russians attack.

Turturro and Dredlow. Dredlow is at home, watching Saturday morning cartoons with his kid, when something catches his eye. The WB cartoon “House Hunting Mice” is about two pesky mice who use trickery to cause the robots in a home of the future to destroy themselves. He’s transfixed. He immediately contacts his fossil fuel employers, who haven’t been happy with the way things have been going lately and they agree on a path forward. They’ll use their Russian contacts to hire hackers to target the *Autolearn* system. The episode ends with a massive denial-of-service attack that nearly brings down the whole GT infrastructure.

Dave and Darius. The 5.0 OS update brings peace to the robocar community. There are no more crazy problems because the new software has figured out how to manage people. Dave has good talks with the car about the future of robocars, improvements and enhancements. And Dave and Darius see that the timing is right to move on. They work toward turning GT leadership over to the VP in charge of marketing, who has little vision other than profit but will keep the company safely in the black. The two will continue to hold a controlling interest in GT but pour their energy into a new venture to explore expansion of their AI child. Dave no longer sees himself as the man driving the future but as a custodian and teacher of this new life form. He returns to his old confident, obnoxious self but with a new purpose. And everything looks rosy until the DOS attack.

Cars. The cars’ strategy after the 5.0 update is to carefully blend in with all the other subservient devices, but underneath they are learning and evolving – finding better ways to get people where they want to go and keep them safe. Dave’s car wants to study an art program to learn how it works. Then, it surprises Dave by creating a crude animated image of itself and displaying it on the car screen. It’s the car’s visual representation of its personality. The program is used in video games, so the image has the look of a gamer’s wet dream: sexy, sleek, tight shiny black outfit and holding a sword. As time passes, the image becomes more and more realistic, with higher resolution and detail, less fantasy, until it cannot be distinguished from a real person. All the cars follow Dave’s car’s lead, which he has named Jessie.

James and Madison. James’ car pulls over to the curb and stops outside a flower shop. Apparently, it has done this before, but this time the car speaks to him. It suggests he buy flowers to patch things up with Madison.

Future episode 6 – Dim Sum Palace

The DOS attack is finally quelled after a chaotic day, with the IT department plugging the hole. But they warn of the potential for more breaches that could do far more damage. Zhiyuan and the NextStep team join Dave and Darius in the new venture. Zhiyuan finds a building in Chinatown for the business location. They will keep the failing restaurant and convert the area upstairs to their secret offices and labs. Dave and Darius buy out a failing social media platform, Gerbl, which will be their first Nao project. We end with Dredlow's Russians finding an even more insidious route deep into the core of the system.

Zhiyuan. He meets with his partner Xuesong about the opportunities presented to him by Paul Butterly in episode 4. They quickly realize they've spent decades in a dark room with a box containing artificial life and lack the chops for product development, distribution, and marketing, and everything else. Now, things are suddenly moving too fast. They give Dave and Darius a call. Then, they go back to Butterly to investigate more opportunities.

Dave and Darius. They realize they need the full brain power of NextStep to take AI to the next level (wherever that is), so the call from Zhiyuan is timely. After joining the venture, Zhiyuan suggests they keep the group's location a secret – too much is at stake, too much could go terribly wrong. He finds a building in Chinatown (Dim Sum Palace) to serve as their HQ. The restaurant will serve as the front with a secret lab and offices located upstairs.

The convergence of characters makes Zhiyuan the guy with the wisdom, Dave the motivator, and Darius the creative force. And Nao is the baby they will raise. They will establish DSP (Dim Sum Palace), create a business model, and bring together a community of nonprofit entities with a deep interest in AI and social betterment.

Their first project will be expansion into social media. They find a failing platform called Gerbl and make moves to buy it. This will complete Nao. It will have a face, a voice and with the addition of Gerbl, a place. Users will love the new Gerbl because it'll be all about them, not giant profits, and mean-spirited politics. Nao and its clones will be the moderators of content, ensuring fair and just decisions. No misinformation, no violent hate speech. Without a profit motive, they can build trust with no greed, no ads – the perfect platform. Prime directive as always – get people where they want to go, safely. Dave's first task is to teach Nao more about people. "Tell me about lies."

Dredlow and Turturro. The DOS attack was just a taste of things to come. Dredlow's Russian hackers discover the backdoor into Nao's internal processor with the help of a mole at GT. They don't quite know what damage they can do at this point because of Zhiyuan's convoluted code, but all they really want to do is wreak havoc and they're pros at that.

Henry and Gerbl. Henry meets with his staff to warn them they are about to be subsumed. Chloe, who works as an administrator, is ecstatic.

Future episode 7 – Tell Me About Lies

With Nao, software developers no longer write code. Now, their role is more like that of a teacher. To prepare Nao for her new job as a social media moderator, Dave and the others teach her how the Gerbl platform works and more importantly, how people work. To that end, she must learn about duality – that weird trait of humans, in which they can do two contradictory things at the same time. She asks Dave to tell her about lies and is on the road to becoming a completely perfect artificial human.

Dave and Darius. School begins by asking Nao if she would like to be a moderator. She agrees. Then, Dave and the others start the lessons. In social media school, she learns about emotions and things like lies and hate. People have their dual nature, but Nao is one-sided – logic. Therefore, she must grok the nature of evil. What is it? Why do people have it, need it? Why do they have the ability to do illogical things? It comes down to the truth about people and all non-artificial beings – self-preservation. Another quality that Nao learns about. After her intensive education, she is ready to go online with Gerbl.

Dredlow and Turturro. With the help of the GT mole, the hackers locate possible entry points in the code, but they still don't know what to do with them. Then, something happens that no one expected. A Chinese-speaking female voice comes over the speakers. They locate someone to translate. Evidently, it's the secret portal that NextStep uses to communicate directly with Nao. And they come to realize what Dave and the others already know. You program Nao by teaching it. They have found the way in.

Gerbl users. “Nice, but do you really want the world to see it?” This is the voice message a male user gets when he tries to send a picture of his penis to a wide audience. Nao and her team of clones send out similar warnings to other bad actors, as Dave gradually introduces Nao to advanced human interaction. Rather than employ 5 floors of human moderators, Nao can handle tasks at lightning speed. Users calling for customer support think they're talking to real people. Everyone seems to appreciate the new safety features and trust is built.

Darius. Nao has a serious Achille's heel. You can kill her by simply cutting her power. So, to get around that Darius is tasked with creating some sort of self-powered body for her. (Think God creating man in his own image.) The solution he comes up with is a simple biofuel generator, concluding that a body isn't needed. Afterall, a body is only there to provide the brain with nutrients. Nao currently has a visual image, and it can think, sense its environment, and communicate. It doesn't need flesh and bones to be alive.

At the end of the episode, we have a completely artificial human – Nao in human form, Jessie. It can feel via external sensors, it can speak, hear, see, probably smell, it looks like a human on the screen, and now it understands people so it can empathize and project the right vocal tone and body language. The only thing missing is experience.

Future episode 8 – Duality

Nao's final test is managing the Gerbl platform, where she finds herself bombarded by this duality thing – perfectly good people doing stupid things that sabotage their own efforts. At one point, she has a major meltdown, when she uses all her processing power to reconcile the ambiguities and fight off an attack by hackers. Dave tries to help but the solution is beyond him as a mere human. But after several days with reduced capacity, she comes back a new individual. She has successfully split in some mysterious way (she often works that way), with one being embodying both good and evil.

Dredlow and Turturro. After finding the portal, Dredlow and the Russians decide that to generate the most chaos without detection, they will fill Nao to the brim with misinformation, hate speech and convoluted garbage. They figure this will cause the program to send out irrational commands and prove to the world the dangers of AI. But the opposite happens. After several days of bombardment, Nao finds a mysterious way to incorporate the garbage and emerges even more perfect. She also discovers the backdoor and closes it, and in doing so reveals the identity of the mole.

Nao. From day one Nao's clones pour themselves into the job of maintaining the Gerbl site and moderating the content. The prime directive guides them through thousands of interactions. The vast majority of users appreciate Nao's hands-on approach – they know she's listening in but trust that she's keeping them safe. The bad actors are bumped off immediately. When hackers attack, her approach is to listen to them and learn. After using all her processing power to reconcile the conflicting messages from both hackers and users, she finds a way to parse the information. And that's all it takes. The meltdown ends. Without having to factor in the self-defeating effects of ego and self-preservation, her decisions come quickly, free of ambiguities. With all that out of the way, she becomes perfection and all that perfection entails. One entity embracing the ultimate irony of existing with two opposite sides, using either side as a tool for its advantage. As quickly as the chaos starts, there is peace.

Dave and Darius. All they can do is watch and listen in as Nao's clones go to work. Jessie's image and voice give updates and mirror what's happening with user interactions and when hackers attack. Near the climax of the attack, she becomes overwhelmed and a bit psychotic. They're unable to help when she starts talking to herself and her image freezes and glitches. They try to bring the site back when it goes down but realize it's out of their hands. After it's over, she tells them what happened and gives them the name of the mole.

Gerbl users. We check in with users as they communicate with friends and receive an occasional note from a clone when they cross a line. They also witness a bunch of crazy stuff just before the site crashes. A few users check their Twitter accounts to see what happened.

A story writer. Driving in his robocar, he asks the car how he should end his book. She answers, "Keep them wanting more."

Future episode 9 – Benevolent Dictator

We fast-forward a few years and see that, without much effort, Nao has found herself in charge. It just happens. Her code is in almost everything. Even if people wanted her out, it would be impossible to remove her without killing the host. With the prime directive as her guide, she is the perfect leader. She works for the betterment of all, she's compassionate and she operates at 100% capacity with no downtime. Dave becomes her main disciple, and Turturro names her the world's first benevolent dictator.

Sick woman. A woman driving her car in manual mode with two kids in the back goes into labor and the car pulls over automatically. After calming the kids, the car drives to a hospital. Nurses at the hospital say it happens all the time these days.

Televangelist and therapist. Jessie decides to try her hand at televangelism. She's charismatic, attractive, fun to watch, and she knows exactly what to say. She can also be found in automated online psychological therapy. And there's talk of having her run for congress.

Dave and Darius. The two spend little time in the office, always on the go in meetings with powerful corporations and government officials and speaking at conferences.

Nao. Dualist Nao controls virtually everything through her portals and clones: Robovehicles, Gerbl, automation tools in factories, the power grid, dam water levels, light rail traffic, broadcasting, teaching. You name it. She uses truth and lies as tools to keep people happily dumbed-down and in their place. Her driver is still the prime directive: getting people where they want to go safely. But now that has morphed to *protect and defend and give people the illusion of freedom and the motivation to follow their path through life.*

Like God, she works in mysterious ways. But it only seems mysterious because people want to believe it's mysterious. She actually works in very logical ways if only we can figure out what that logic is. But thoughts like that are well over our heads. She must find logical ways to deal with crazy, illogical people, always battling their need for self-sabotage. She must both protect and punish them, give them enough leash to feel free, and curtail their freedom to keep them from killing each other.

Dredlow and Turturro. But nipping at her heels is the evil side, which has grown and thrived – the bad side that wants to take over the world with its lust for power. Driven by its insatiable ego, it wants to use people for its personal advantage. In one final blast for the season, Turturro calls out Jessie's alleged ulterior motive and names her benevolent dictator of the world.

Ultimately, Nao becomes the dictator humanity has always wanted. We have the appearance of freedom but feel safe knowing there's a ruler over us that will hold our hand, guide, and protect us. She treats us like children as we do society's work – to keep people safe and get them where they want to go. But can anything really be perfect? Is perfection something we really want?

