

Self Driving Trouble

by  
Christopher Tharratt

EXT OFFICE DAY

The scene opens on a brightly lit, modern office. Leslie is at his desk, meticulously organising papers while on the phone to his wife. Leslie is smiling uncontrollably.

LESLIE  
i will be home to pack soon

Taron enters, texting on his phone, dropping a folder heavily onto Leslie's desk

TARON  
Leslie Listen, I've got  
some...exciting news

LESLIE  
Yes, Taron?

TARON  
The new self-driving system is finally  
installed. Revolutionary. Game-  
changing

Taron opens the file on the desk showing the system and how it works

TARON  
Of course, something this  
groundbreaking requires rigorous  
testing. I need someone reliable...  
someone with a keen eye for detail... to  
assist me.

LESLIE  
Absolutely, Taron. Anything.

TARON  
Excellent, see you downstairs in 10  
minutes

LESLIE  
Taron, I... I had plans. It's my 10-  
year anniversary this weekend...

TARON  
Anniversary? Oh. Well, those things  
come and go. This is cutting-edge  
technology, Leslie! Think of the  
experience! You'll learn so much.  
Besides, I need you. It's non-

negotiable.

LESLIE

But, sir.

TARON

If you still want your job, you better  
be downstairs in 10 minutes.

LESLIE

Yes, sir.

Leslie's eyes are filled with a mixture of sadness and  
resentment towards Taron.

EXT OUTSIDE OFFICE CAR PARK

The car drives towards them all by itself, and Leslie looks  
at the front seat, revealing no one is there

TARON

Our first driving car system that can  
be installed into any car, no matter  
what make you have

LESLIE

that truly is amazing.

TARON

right you will be in the front seat  
taking notes on how it works and i'll  
be in the back.

They enter the car, and it drives off. It starts off a bit  
bumpy, then speeds up and slows down; Leslie takes notes on  
his tablet.

LESLIE

Really good speed control.

TARON

It analyses the speed limits and  
changes speed.

the radio automatically turns on.

RADIO

Breaking news: the internet is down.

the radio cuts out and the car speeds up even more and drives  
in the middle of nowhere and then stops and locks all the

doors Leslie and Taron try the doors and Leslie start to panic, then takes a deep breathe and notices an ERROR on the car dashboard, tries the tablet but cant type on the document, as it says PLEASE CONNECT TO INTERNET Leslie takes out his notepad

TARON

(Pounding the seat) What the hell is happening?

He tries the door handle. Locked.

TARON

Unlock the doors! Leslie, do something! Find the manual!

Leslie frantically searches the glove compartment.

LESLIE

I can't find it

TARON

(Scoffs, slamming his fist on the seat) This is ridiculous! Absolutely ridiculous! Trapped in a... a glorified metal box!

LESLIE

(Quietly, scribbling in his notepad) I'm just... noting the error messages. There's a sequence here, I think...

TARON

Error messages? Your notes are the error messages! You probably jinxed it by writing in that prehistoric notepad! Should have been using the digital interface. It's clearly stated in section -

LESLIE

(Interrupting, his voice rising slightly) I was using the digital interface, Taron! Remember? The system crashed along with everything else when the internet went down!

TARON

(Ignoring him) Section 4.7, subsection B: "Failure to properly digitally document diagnostic procedures will void

vehicle warranty and may result in catastrophic system failure!" This is all on you, Leslie!

LESLIE  
(Rubbing his temples) There must be a manual override.

TARON  
Then override it or your out of a job

LESLIE  
We need to stay calm

TARON  
Calm? CALM?! We're stranded in the middle of nowhere, in a hyper-intelligent death trap, and the fate of my investment rests on your... your note-scribbling incompetence!

LESLIE  
(Looking out the window) The internet outage... it's... unsettling. Think about it. Everything is dependent on the net now. It's like the world has come to a standstill.

TARON  
(Eyes darting around) Maybe it's the competition! Sabotage! Someone must've leaked we are testing the car today.

LESLIE  
Do you think we should try calling for help?

TARON  
no signal

LESLIE  
The cell towers must be down.

Taron is at the back, frustrated, trying to call people or get service while Leslie looks at the car and sees if he can change the car to manual to get out.

TARON  
(Pacing, agitated, clutching his chest) My blood pressure... I can feel it rising. All this stress... the pressure...! This car was supposed to be

my ticket! My legacy! And you... you  
fucking ruined it!

LESLIE

(Concerned) You're hyperventilating.

TARON

(Grasping his chest tighter) I... I  
can't... breathe...!

Leslie tries to call emergency services but has no signal.  
Leslie looks back at Taron.

LESLIE

(Firmly) Okay, okay. Stay calm. Don't  
panic. I need you to breathe slowly.

TARON

(Weakly) This... this is all your fault...  
I'm going to die... because of you...

Leslie reaches backwards and helps Taron loosen his tie and  
opens his shirt collar

LESLIE

(Instructing calmly) Deep breaths,  
Taron. In through your nose, out  
through your mouth. That's it. Good.

Leslie keeps repeating the deep breathe while he looks in the  
glove department to see if there's a first aid bag and it has  
aspirin

LESLIE

Just our luck; this should help.

Leslie gives it to Taron to chew on and it helps him get  
better and be able to breathe properly

LESLIE

thank fuck it was just a minor heart  
attack.

TARON

This is all your fault! If you had  
gotten us out before it went into  
lockdown, this wouldn't have happened!

LESLIE

That's it! I'm done!

Taron looks at Leslie, surprised by the outburst.

LESLIE

Seven years, Taron! Seven years I've dedicated my life to you, sacrificing everything. Weekends, holidays, my own damn sanity! And for what? To be treated like dirt? To be screamed at and blamed for everything that goes wrong in your pathetic little world?

Leslie's voice cracks. He's shaking violently.

LESLIE

You don't see me, do you? You don't see that I have a life, that I have feelings! You just see a machine, a tool to get you what you want!

Leslie clutches his chest, hyperventilating.

LESLIE

Continuing, voice cracking: I'm the one who fixes all your mistakes! I'm the one who covers for you. I'm the one who makes your life functional! I just - I can't. You're impossible! How can you expect anyone to keep up with you?

He clutches his chest again, and his face is pale, and tears stream down his face. He sits backwards on the chair, gasping for air.

LESLIE

(Panicked) I...I can't... breathe...

Taron in the back just watches as Leslie is having a panic attack.

TARON

You brought this on yourself; no one talks to me like that.

LESLIE

(breathing heavily) i... quit

Leslie looks pale and Taron stares at Leslie, his anger dissipating, replaced by shock and confusion.

TARON  
(Awkwardly) Leslie? Hey... hey, it's  
okay. Look at me.

Leslie doesn't respond, his breathing ragged

TARON  
In... and out... slowly. That's it. Like I  
was doing before...

Taron gently tries to guide Leslie's breathing, mimicking  
slow, deep breaths. He places a tentative hand on Leslie's  
back.

Leslie slowly started to calm down and starts to get back to  
steady breathing

TARON  
thats better.

LESLIE  
Thanks

TARON  
Don't get soppy. Let's find a way out  
now.

LESLIE  
well every car has a manual; this car  
should have one.

TARON  
If it's not in the glove compartment,  
then try under the driver's seat.

Leslie reaches under the seat and finds the book

LESLIE  
there must be a way we can open the  
doors for a brief moment to get out

TARON  
well hurry and find it now

Leslie looks at Taron with a slightly annoyed look

TARON  
i mean, please.

Leslie looks through the book, finding a way to open the  
system to open the locks



LESLIE

ok we might be able to open the doors  
but we wont have long, as the car is  
on lockdown and wont work properly  
until the network is back on

TARON

we just need to time it right.

2 hours pass and Leslie is messing with the wires under the  
drivers seat and puts 2 wires together

LESLIE

On the count of 3, the doors will open  
and we have 10 seconds before it locks  
down again

TARON

1...2....3...

Leslie sparks the wires; the doors finally open and Taron and  
leslie get out before it relocks and land on the ground

LESLIE

we did it.

TARON

No, you did it.

Leslie is confused, as hes never had praise from Taron before

TARON

i realised i take you for granted and  
i will do my best to change.

LESLIE

thats all i ask.

TARON

so see you Monday.

Leslie smiles at Taron and they both get up and walk side by  
side back to town

THE END