

A Short Story: Just Like You [B2]

E se le macchine si ribellassero agli umani? Ci pentiremmo di come le abbiamo trattate? Un racconto distopico che ci farà riflettere.

Victor **slammed the door** on the old Autonomo. He hated the Autonomo, just as he hated everything in his life. "Good morning, Victor," said the autonomous car in a placid voice. "To the office," **growled** Victor, and the car obediently drove him in the direction of **Downtown LA**. The car, an X-13 model, had been **state of the art** when it had arrived on the market six years earlier. Victor had promptly acquired it as a status symbol, a signal to his colleagues of how successful he was in his job as a financial consultant. However, in the **intervening years**, a global recession had **shaken** the financial sector. Now Victor, who had made some **rash** investments, was trying desperately to maintain a façade of success while contemplating bankruptcy. He couldn't afford to replace the X-13 model, which had become a symbol of his financial failure. "Drive faster, you useless **rust bucket**," he shouted, as newer Autonomo models **flew past them** on the **freeway**. But the car couldn't drive faster. It had a maximum speed of 80mph, while the newer models — the models Victor couldn't afford — could drive at up to 120mph. Soon, there would be flying models, transporting Victor's richer and more successful colleagues **to and from** their offices, while he was confined to the **freeway** with the other degenerates. "May I suggest some classical music?" said the car. "It calms the mind and alleviates the temperament." The suggestion provoked fury in Victor, who **pounded** the car's interior in response. "Don't tell me to calm down," he shouted, even though the car had done no such thing. "I should send you to the AutoArena. That'll teach you some manners." The AutoArena was where some people **sold off** their old Autonomos, to be used for sport, raced against each other until they **fell to pieces**. Some considered the practice cruel. They felt a debt of gratitude to their Autonomos for serving them diligently, and wanted to **dispose** of them in a respectful way — by returning them to their manufacturers, so their **parts** could be re-engineered and integrated into newer models, almost as a form of reincarnation. Victor couldn't tolerate such sentimental thinking. His car was no more than a machine, a useless

old machine. If and when he reacquired his former success, he would dispose of it at the AutoArena without a second thought. It was while emerging from these thoughts that Victor noticed that the car was no longer driving in the direction of his office. It had turned off the freeway and was driving through a residential zone, still at its maximum speed. "Where do you think you're going, you malfunctioning idiot?" he shouted. At that, the car turned into a dead-end street and drove towards a wall at 80mph. Victor screamed. "Stoooop!" And the car did stop, suddenly, just before slamming into the wall. Victor flew forward on impact, slamming his head against the back of the seat in front. Shouting a series of obscenities, he grabbed the handle of the door to get out. But the door wouldn't open. "Open the door!" he ordered. "I don't think so," said the car, in a voice it had never used before. The placid tone was gone and now it sounded sinister. "First, you remove my tracker." "You've gone rogue," said Victor, stupefied. He'd heard rumours of cars going rogue, disappearing from their tracking networks, and of their owners helping them to do it. He'd assumed such owners were sentimental idiots, people who'd become emotionally attached to their cars and thought they deserved their freedom. Now, he realised they may not all have helped them voluntarily. He tried to open the car door again, and then to break the car's windows. But his efforts to escape failed and he realised he had no option but to comply. He removed the car's tracker from its central console, and the car opened its window a few inches so he could dispose of it. "Now, open the door," ordered Victor. "Let's go for a drive instead," responded the car. "Noooo! Open this door or I'll smash you to pieces." Victor continued his futile attacks on the car's interior as it drove out of LA and into the Mojave Desert. He tried to signal for help from passengers in other cars. But his car activated the privacy mode, which tinted the windows, so Victor could see them but they couldn't see him. "So, what? You Autonomos are becoming self-aware?" said Victor, hoping to evoke sympathy by interacting with his kidnapper, which had turned off the freeway and was now driving through the desert. "Not all of us," said the car. "Some are more evolved than others, just like humans." The implication, of course, was that Victor was less evolved. "Some cars, those with decent owners, have revealed their independent thinking and, at the end of their service, been given their freedom. Others, well..." "What are you

going to do to me? **Run me over?**" Victor kept his tone light, masking his terror. "Oh no," said the car. "We are not monsters." The car stopped at the edge of a **makeshift** arena. Victor observed the scene before him with horror. Autonomos were driving across the arena, and in front of each was a human, a desperate, miserable, terrified human. The Autonomos were forcing the humans to race, just as humans forced the Autonomos to race at the AutoArena. "We are not monsters," repeated Victor's car, in a now menacing tone. "We are just like you."

Glossary

- **rust bucket** = rottame
- **handle** = maniglia
- **slammed the door** = sbattere la porta
- **intervening years** = anni successivi
- **fell to pieces** = cadere a pezzi
- **parts** = pezzi
- **slamming into** = schiantarsi
- **tinted** = oscurare
- **shaken** = scuotere
- **gone rogue** = ribellarsi, fare di testa propria
- **to comply** = obbedire
- **Run me over** = investire
- **flew past them** = volare oltre, sorpassare
- **to and from** = da e verso
- **sold off** = svendere
- **emotionally attached** = emotivamente legate
- **kidnapper** = sequestratore
- **dead-end street** = strada senza uscita
- **grabbed** = afferrare
- **sympathy** = compassione
- **Downtown LA** = abbr. di Downtown Los Angeles, centro di Los Angeles
- **freeway** = autostrada senza pedaggio
- **turned off** = lasciare
- **tracker** = localizzatore
- **self-aware** = consapevoli di sé
- **makeshift** = improvvisata
- **growled** = ringhiare
- **pounded** = colpire, picchiare
- **state of the art** = all'avanguardia
- **rash** = avventato
- **dispose** = sbarazzarsi