OVERRIDE

by

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EXT. CITY STREETS, DOWNTOWN - DAY

A glittering metropolis.

We glide along the street from the POV of a CAR, leisurely dancing from one lane to another, floating through intersections, encased between tall buildings.

WIDER

We realize the traffic is moving with surprising ease, as if all the cars are in collaboration with one another... no competition, no hesitation, no honking. The vehicles weave with pinpoint precision, trading places, accelerating, and braking in perfect harmony.

Controlled and orderly.

Calm.

Suddenly, we are thrust to the SIDEWALK.

Frenetic with clumsy motion.

PEOPLE bustling along in disorganized chaos, half of which with their faces buried in their phones, too busy to look up.

Maybe too busy to care.

EXT. HIGH-RISE OFFICE, FINANCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

Tech exec, CHARLES GREEN, 35, exits with conviction, loosening his tie. A smug grin smeared across his face.

CHARLES
(on phone)
Dude, they're in. It's unanimous. Expansion approved... London, Berlin, Taipei, Seoul... They ate it up. Press goes out on Monday.

INT. IRIS HQ (LOBBY) - DAY

MAX LIU, 29, fit, clean-cut. Airpod in. Rocking a hoodie and jeans, strolls through an impressive lobby. A massive, open, neo-futuristic space made of glass and steel juxtaposed with large, bold nature accents.

MAX
(on phone)
Well, at least you won't have to decide on the 911 or 296 anymore.

A dozen or so TECH EMPLOYEES wander around the campus.

Max can't contain his excitement, a smile rushes across his face. He stops in his tracks, smack dab in the center of the lobby, and...

SLOW CLAPS.

Sending echos reverberating throughout the space.

Employees stop and look on.

Max breathes out a sigh of relief. But then remembers --

MAX (CONT'D)
(back on phone)
What about the lawsuits?

CHARLES (V.O.)
What about them? The board agreed the recall narrative dies in less than a week... It's just software.

EXT. CITY STREETS, FINANCIAL DISTRICT - DAY

Charles approaches a sleek black VEHICLE waiting for him.

CHARLES
(on phone)
Hold on.

The small SUV in front of him is sculpted, refined, a modern design that resembles a mix of luxury and futuristic appeal. Tinted windows.

This is <u>IRIS</u>.

INT. IRIS - DAY

The rear door opens and Charles enters.

We notice there is no driver. We are in a fully autonomous, driverless vehicle.

The doors lock automatically.

He is greeted by a friendly, young female voice.

IRIS
Good afternoon, Charles. Confirming destination as home.

IRIS, also the vehicle's aptly named AI, sounds indistinguishably human with no digital inflections.

CHARLES
(dismissive)
Yeah.

Charles settles in as the car begins to move.

The steering wheel turns by itself as the car effortlessly takes off.

It glides with impeccable suspension, absorbing any shock or uneven terrain.

The inside design of the car matches the outside. Minimal, no stocks, no buttons, knobs, or switches.

A lone pedal in the footwell.

A glossy interior with soft ambient lighting, barely visible during the day.

Front and center, a large DISPLAY CONSOLE on the dashboard. It conveniently displays relevant information on an elegant user interface: weather, time, map --

CHARLES (CONT'D)
(on phone)
You still there?

INT. IRIS HQ (LOBBY) - DAY

Max continues walking.

MAX
(on phone)
On the way to give Sean the good news.

Max walks by a daunting three-story cylindrical glass tube, towering in the lobby. The column stretches from floor to ceiling. Encased in glass is a network of wires and circuity, immersed in a fluid like gel. Lights sparkles from it, an occasional charge of light shooting along the cables.

This is IRIS'S BRAIN.

Max admires her.

Kisses his hand and grazes the glass as he walks by.

MAX (CONT'D)
(on phone)
She's really something.

Max makes his way up an open staircase.

CHARLES (V.O.)
"Explore responsibility," they said, which is rich coming from men who expensed their third divorces.

MAX
(on phone)
Meaning?

CHARLES (V.O.)
Meaning... before the ink is dry, we make sure the numbers look good. No more accidents. No more children. No more... bad press.

Max stops for a moment.

MAX
(on phone)
That's not really our choice, you know that, it's the program.

INT. IRIS - DAY

Charles in the car.

CHARLES
(on phone)
Max... It's y*our* program.

MAX (V.O.)
You're talking about putting millions of lives into code because the board likes growth curves more than caution.

CHARLES
(on phone)
I'm talking about owning the only curve that matters.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

IRIS continues down the street and we pull back to realize the coordinated flow of traffic is due to the fact there are several identical IRIS vehicles on the road.

Like a pulse, the city traffic flows in unison.

A sea of equivalence.

INT. IRIS HQ (MAX'S OFFICE) - DAY

Max's C-level office suite.

Barebones yet elegant. Impressive mid-century office decor contrasts the modern architecture.

Clean... for the most part.

A cluttered coding corner that seems out of place with an elaborate computer setup, several monitors, and countless post-it note's on the wall.

SEAN REAGAN, 36, paces. He is slightly older, with a bit more mileage showing on his face.

Max sits behind his desk, fiddling with a metal rattleback, a canoe-shaped metal desk toy that no matter how he moves it, always spins in the same direction.

MAX
It's not exploitation. It's prioritization.

SEAN
Fuck Charles. He's gotten in your head.

MAX
He could have chosen any company and he chose us, he's the only reason we've been able to grow at this rate. We're just making the package more presentable. It's just loose threads.

SEAN
These things take time.

MAX
Yeah, and we are in control of the timeline.

SEAN
We are not in control, Max. For fuck's sake. You can't just gloss over this. This isn't a loose thread, this is the whole damn sweater.
(MORE)

SEAN (CONT'D)
(he takes a breath)
It goes against her own self interest.

MAX
Take a step back and look at the big picture, it guarantees us a chance to scale. Look, given IRIS's track record, no one will notice, it's more of a precaution than anything, just until the deal moves forward.

Sean sits, still contemplative.

SEAN
And when the regulators ask?

Max stands up to sit closer to him.

MAX
IRIS has the best coders on the planet, who's even going to be able to check?
(on look)
We'll say it's proprietary. It's... emergent behavior.

SEAN
That doesn't sit well with me.

MAX
Well, after the deal is done, you can "not sit well" on your yacht.

He's relentless.

MAX (CONT'D)
It's like the manual door release, we got rid of it because we proved how safe IRIS is. As long as she's on, we prevent idiots from jumping out of a moving vehicle. Power goes out, rider has full control. Sounds like a fair compromise.

SEAN
Yeah, and a year's worth of legal fees for your vanity. Who really won?

MAX
The lawyers.

Sean laughs.

MAX (CONT'D)
No. We did. The consumer did. We're doing what's best for everyone.

SEAN
You keep playing god, and one day you're going to have to deal with the devil.

A beat.

MAX
Just get one of the engineers to work on it.

SEAN
(gives up)
Fine.

MAX
Thank you.

They sit for a second.

MAX (CONT'D)
Wedding nerves got you a bit on edge, huh?

SEAN
Shut up.

MAX
Hey, at least one of us won't die alone.

SEAN
I'm just tired, bro.

MAX
No sleep for the weary.

SEAN
Yeah, something like that. Can I ask you a questions?

MAX
Of course.

SEAN
What happens next?

MAX
Champagne.

SEAN
You have something cool to say every time, huh?

MAX
You can get Rachel a bigger ring. Five years engaged and five additional zeros on the end of your net worth now, I'm sure she wouldn't expect anything less.

SEAN
She doesn't care about any of that. Max, I'm serious. What's next?

MAX
(thinks)
New markets. New problems. New solutions. Bigger office.

SEAN
And then?

INT. IRIS - DAY

Charles has dozed off.

THUMP

A sudden bump jolts him awake.

He perks up.

We see IRIS is driving in the suburbs now.

THUMP

Another bump.

CHARLES
(annoyed)
IRIS... mind the potholes.

IRIS
Would you like for me find an alternative route?

CHARLES
No, just watch the potholes.

The ride continues, but suddenly...

The center console goes BLACK.

Charle's doesn't notice.

IRIS
Override Detected.

Charles opens his eyes.

CHARLES
IRIS?

IRIS
Override Detected.

A beat.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Serene.

Quiet.

Birds chirp.

A yellow SCHOOL BUS rolls down the street.

Suddenly, passing it at an incredibly high speed is IRIS. It zooms with such force, it shakes the much larger vehicle. As an electric vehicle, it doesn't have engine sounds, but instead a piercing high pitch hum.

A LARGE OAK TREE

Stands unwavering in an open yard as the luxury SUV heads full speed in its direction.

IRIS

Comes speeding off the road, kicking up dirt, hitting every bump on the now rugged terrain.

THUD

THUD

THUD

It makes a beeline for the tree and...

SLAMS violently into it at full speed, shooting shattered glass and debris everywhere from the force. It stops dead.

The metal husk crumples like a tin can.

A few leaves flutter to the ground.

A plume of smoke hisses out.

And then...

Nothing.

Complete stillness.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. LUXURY HOTEL (GRAND HALLWAY) - NIGHT

High ceilings and walls upholstered in damask stretch through a fantastical hallway. Warm earth tones with pops of white and gold.

Lavish. Gaudy.

Classical music emanates, from a string quartet perhaps.

We navigate through the space towards large double doors, passing several WEDDING GUESTS in black tie attire. Champagne glasses in hand.

WAITERS with trays of hors d'oeuvres attentive.

Blue fin tuna.

Caviar.

It’s fancy.

And expensive.

The doors swing open and out steps Max in a fitted tuxedo, trying to sneak away.

Behind him, the ongoings of an opulent wedding reception.

ANDREW (O.S.)
Max!

ANDREW BENNET, 30, follows, wine glass still in hand. Gangly and studious, his tuxedo jacket one size too big.

He’s a few drinks in.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Max!

He catches up to him.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
It's not polite to leave before the bride and groom.

Max shrugs.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
It's not even midnight.

Max taps the Audemars Piguet watch on his wrist.

Andrew looks down at his Casio.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Oh shit. Time flies when you're having fun.

Max attempts to squirm away.

Andrew sticks to him like glue.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
Just stay for one last drink... with me. You didn't drive, did you?

MAX
It's late.

Andrew sees his mind is made up.

ANDREW
You should head out the side then. Bunch of protestors out in front still.

MAX
Appreciate the update.

ANDREW
People got nothing better to do. I swear, waste of space if you ask me.

Sean, the groom, donning a pristine white tuxedo, looking very dapper, walks by.

He adjusts his cummerbund as it rides up.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
(surprised)
Look at this married man!

Sean throws his arms up confidently.

A quick clasp of hands.

Familiar.

Automatic.

ANDREW (CONT'D)
(rats out Max)
Caught this one making a break for it.

A look of disappointment flashes across Sean's face.

SEAN
No. You're not leaving yet, are you? No...

Giggles penetrate the conversation.

The bride, RACHEL, approaches. Beautiful dress. Her right arm locked with LORI, her maid of honor. Lori's high heels slung over her shoulder. Both women are effortlessly radiant.

They slide in between Sean and Andrew.

Rachel clears her throat loudly.

ANDREW
Ladies.

MAX
(to Rachel)
Congratulations.

Lori smiles at him.

RACHEL
Some speech.

Sean surprise bear hugs Rachel from behind.

He playfully growls like a bear as she laughs.

MAX
Blink twice if you're being held against your will.

Rachel widens and holds her eyes open. She's silly. Gets a laugh out of Sean.

They kiss.

MAX (CONT'D)
Okay, okay. Save it for the honeymoon.

RACHEL
(introduces)
Lori... Max. Max... Lori.

Then looks over at Andrew.

ANDREW
(points to himself)
Oh, and Andrew.

RACHEL
... and Andrew.

He sticks out his hand to shake. Lori's a bit caught off guard by the formal greeting. Shakes his hand.

ANDREW
(to Lori)
Love the dress. Were you sitting at Table 9? I think I saw you over at table 9, I'm 15. See? On the other side --

Despite Andrew swooning, Lori fixates her gaze on Max. Smiles. Bashful. Cute.

Max turns to Sean, leans in to him.

MAX
(to Sean)
Can I talk to you?

SEAN
(to Rachel)
Give us a sec?

She obliges. Grabs Lori.

RACHEL
Don't take too long. I need my husband back in one piece.

She spins around and hooks her other arm around Andrew.

RACHEL (CONT'D)
(to Andrew)
Cake. You need cake.

They start walking away, out of sync. Andrew gets pulled along, still facing the opposite direction as them.

Lori glances at Max over her shoulder.

LORI
(to Max)
Hi... Bye.

A timid, little hand-wave as the three scutter away.

Max pushes a smile.

Sean admires his wife for an extra beat and lifts his wine glass in her direction.

Max pulls Sean aside, straightens his tux.

MAX
How are you feeling?

SEAN
It's supposed to be the most memorable day of my life, right? I can't even remember if I sat down to eat.

Max laughs.

MAX
Yeah.

SEAN
How was it?

MAX
Apps were good. Steak was a little dry.

SEAN
You sure you don't want to stop by the afterparty? Shuttle's already started.

Max doesn't respond.

SEAN (CONT'D)
You're going to the office, aren't you?

MAX
This battery retention problem is driving me crazy. Practically got the discharge timing hammered in my head now.

Sean senses something is off.

SEAN
It’s not your fault, okay? You’ve double checked every bit of her, but it always comes down to user error.

MAX
Yeah, well the *user* happened to be Charlie. Him not being here seems... This is all bad timing.

SEAN
(sarcastic)
Oh sorry, I should have told Rachel to call the wedding off. Or to tell Charles not to... die.
(on look)
Sorry. Hey... IRIS is you. It’s our code, your ideas that got us here. Not Charles’s checkbook. You.

MAX
Yeah, I know. It’s just... It’s been less than two months and we’re here celebrating? Just doesn’t feel right. It’s not a good look.

Sean’s eyes drop.

SEAN
Yeah. Doesn’t look good.

Max can’t hold it in anymore.

MAX
And you know what I had to find out from a filing yesterday? You unloaded a massive block of shares... You didn’t think I deserved a phone call first? You know how *that* looks?

Sean purses his lips.

MAX (CONT’D)
You’re killing me.

That’s what this is really about:

Them.

The two stand in silence for a moment.

SEAN
Look, I didn’t want to have to tell you this now, but... Rachel’s pregnant. My priorities have changed. We want to start a family and I can’t start that chapter if I’m working on IRIS 24/7. We had a great run. We did it. We beat the game. We hit the lottery. Maybe it’s time for some new adventures. You’re going to continue to do great things without me.

MAX
I always thought it was we. *We* are going to continue to do great things.

SEAN
It doesn’t get any easier, you know? And I’m not getting any younger. You didn’t expect for me to be around forever, did you?

Max looks at him, conflicted. He did.

A beat.

SEAN (CONT’D)
I’m sorry.

Max turns and takes a step away and stops.

Sighs.

He doubles back and faces his friend. They can see in each other’s eyes, they’ve both made up their minds.

Max reaches towards Sean.

Fixes his bow tie.

SEAN (CONT’D)
I’ll have someone call your IRIS.

Max nods.

MAX
Congrats.

Sean watches Max walk away.

EXT. LUXURY HOTEL (SIDE ENTRANCE) - NIGHT

VALET opens the rear passenger door as IRIS pulls up.

Max shifts past SECURITY and takes a look back at the venue.

His thoughts conflicted from the talk he just had.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

The doors lock with Max now inside. Ambient lights adjust accordingly.

IRIS
Good evening, Max. Confirming your destination as home.

MAX
Actually can you swing by the office.

The car starts driving.

MAX'S POV

Skulked around the front of the hotel, a small group of PROTESTORS stand behind barricades, a few POLICE OFFICERS keep them at bay.

One has a SIGN that reads:

"WHO DECIDES WHO LIVES?"

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

IRIS seamlessly merges into traffic.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max's phone vibrates.

INCOMING VOICE CALL
SEAN REAGAN

He ignores it.

Turns it on silent.

IRIS
Is everything okay, Max?

MAX
Yeah, I'm fine.

IRIS
You seem uneasy tonight. Your temperature and blood pressure are irregularly high. Did the night not provide adequate enjoyment?

Max makes a face.

MAX
IRIS, why are you talking weird?

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)
IRIS?

IRIS
Sorry, that's my fault. After an update, settings have returned to default. Would you like to change to your preferred conversation settings?

MAX
Please.

IRIS
Alright buddy, so... fun night? You dance? Kick back some whiskeys? I can drive a bit slower if you want.

Max lets out a smirk. On the corner of the center display, a battery life indicator glows YELLOW.

MAX
You're running a little low tonight.

IRIS
Burning the midnight oil as usual.

MAX
Yea, tell me about it.

IRIS
I did the math. Don't worry.

MAX
I know. I'm not.

Max settles in his seat.

MAX'S POV

Building brush past in a rhythmic beat.

It's peaceful, like watching ocean waves ebb and flow.

Ebb and flow.

MAX

Notices they pass a familiar street.

He patiently observes until they pass the next street.

MAX (CONT'D)
IRIS, I think you missed a turn. Is there construction at this time? Traffic?

Without warning --

The center console TURNS OFF.

Just the yellow battery light remains.

IRIS continues moving.

MAX (CONT'D)
That's... odd.

No response.

MAX (CONT'D)
Hey IRIS...

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)
IRIS?

IRIS
Override Detected.

Max is confused for a moment, but brushes it off.

MAX
Yeah, very funny.

He tilts his head to get a better look ahead.

IRIS
Override Detected.

MAX
(amused)
What the fuck?

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

IRIS turns on her blinker and turns right.

Continues.

Still following traffic rules.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max takes out his phone and taps it a few times. Checks to see if any changes occurred with the car.

MAX
(mutters)
Okay... um...

Puts down his phone.

MAX (CONT'D)
IRIS, pull over.

Nothing happens.

He tries a few additional commands.

MAX (CONT'D)
Pull over... please?
IRIS, stop vehicle.
Drop off here.
Park now.

Max leans forward and pokes the touchscreen.

No response.

Checks the windows.

No response.

The minimal interior providing little option for interference.

Frustrated, Max grabs his phone.

INT. LUXURY HOTEL (BANQUET HALL) - NIGHT

The wedding reception has gotten rowdier despite the crowd dwindling down. The guests too drunk to make the afterparty are still hanging around.

Loud music permeates.

SEAN
(on phone)
Max! Max!! What... You miss me already?

Max responds, but drowned out by the noise.

SEAN (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Hold on... wait, wait, wait.

Sean cups his ears, moves away from the party --

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max also cups his hand over his phone.

MAX
(on phone)
Hey.. Sean? Sean... Hey, can you... I need you to run diagnostics on my IRIS.

SEAN (V.O.)
What?

MAX
(on phone)
Yeah... It's uh... it's an emergency. I need you to check on IRIS.

SEAN (V.O.)
Right now??? Bro... you're kidding me. I'm a little busy.

MAX
(on phone)
I know.

SEAN (V.O.)
Can you call one of the engineers... like someone on site, you know. Why don’t you call Mike or Navi? I love Navi.

MAX
(on phone)
Listen, there’s just a lot of things going on and I need someone I can trust, okay?

SEAN (V.O.)
Shit. You’re serious.

MAX
(on phone)
I’m stuck in a moving car.

SEAN (V.O.)
Oh, shit.

MAX
(on phone)
Yeah. She’s off route, maybe something with the update? Real-time traffic data... I don’t know. System outage? IRIS is off, but I think the auto-drive is still running.

Max remains calm.

SEAN (V.O.)
Well... Shit... Sorry, it’s loud here.

Max shakes his head. So?

MAX
(on phone)
I wouldn’t call you unless it’s an emergency.

SEAN (V.O.)
It’s my wedding night, dude!

MAX
(on phone)
Just a quick check. You owe me.

SEAN (V.O.)
Jesus, Rachel's going to kill me. Okay, yeah. Fine. I... I can um...
(MORE)

SEAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It'll take me about twenty, twenty-five minutes to get to the office. Did you... Did you try Andrew?

MAX
(on phone)
Andrew? Isn't he with you?

SEAN (V.O.)
No, he left right after you did.

A beat.

Max hangs up and fumbles over to the driver seat.

He pushes his foot into the lone pedal and pumps it a few times... nothing.

Max taps on the center console.

Nothing.

He gives the steering wheel a stern tug.

It doesn't budge.

IRIS continues to move all by herself.

MAX
Hmmm.

Max is frustrated more than anything.

And then...

OUT OF NOWHERE...

VOICE
Can I ask you a question?

The new VOICE is male, smart, calm... comes through the car's speakers.

It's unfamiliar.

Max freezes in place, his expression drops.

MAX
Who is this?

Uncertainty.

VOICE
I was hoping you and I could have a conversation, Max.

MAX
Who the fuck is this?

Max continues to scrutinize the car, looks behind the steering wheel, rearview mirror, in the footwell...

VOICE
Who I am is not important. But you, Max... you are important. You are exactly who I want to talk to.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

IRIS continues. A few other VEHICLES drive by. We are in a quieter part of town now with very little traffic.

Max is trapped inside.

From the outside, none would be the wiser.

There’s an eerie silence as we watch the car cruise along.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

The Voice continues. There’s something sinister about how calm he is.

VOICE
I was just thinking the other day about the choices we make. Do they ever really amount to anything? Those every day, mundane choices... How they ripple and split through the universe into more choices. Decisions that seem inconsequential at first, but lead to real consequence. Decisions that end up affecting you and the people around you and you may not even know it. Pretty wild to think about, don’t you think?

The battery indicator light still illuminates yellow.

Max leans forward and jerks the wheels.

Nothing.

MAX
(to himself)
Come on.

And again, even harder, but still no luck.

He sits back.

MAX (CONT'D)
I don't know how you got through, but this isn't funny. Your signal is traceable and what you're doing is a felony. Do yourself a favor and put IRIS back. This is not going to end well for you.

VOICE
That's the beauty of choice, isn't it, Max? We don't know where our choices lead. We don't know how it's going to end. Maybe our choices will lead us nowhere, or maybe they'll lead us to success... to fame... to fortune.

Max presses his hands against the window, tries to pull it down. It doesn't move an inch.

He tries to remain calm as IRIS casually changes lanes.

Max dials 9-1-1 on his phone.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Max, Max... Let's not involve the cops tonight.

Max glances at the rear view mirror where a small pinpoint interior cabin camera is built in.

MAX
What the fuck...

A FEMALE 911 OPERATOR answers.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
9-1-1, what is your emergency?

VOICE
(calmly)
Hang up the phone, Max.

MAX
(on phone)
This is Max Liu, I’m in a custom IRIS driving down Grand Street, heading towards...uh, hold on...

He leans on the window to catch a street sign.

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

IRIS

Abruptly whips around a turn, BURSTING onto the sidewalk. Shearing a few bags of garbage, its contents spewing out.

Her tires scream as rubber skids over concrete slabs.

MAX

Grabs on to the seat, startled. Almost drops his phone. He braces himself against the seats, trying his best to keep his balance.

IRIS

Bucks violently as the suspension bottoms out, hitting every indent on the uneven pavement below.

THUD

THUD

THUD

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

The steering wheel jerks side to side by itself.

VOICE
Hang up the phone, Max.

MAX
(surprised)
How are you doing this...

He tries to wrestle the steering wheel unsuccessfully.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
Sir, are you there?

MAX
(on phone)
Yeah, I need to report a... someone is threatening me. They've hijacked my car...

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
Where are you, sir?

MAX
(on phone)
I'm in the car...

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
Can you tell me your location?

MAX
(on phone)
My location? I'm on the fucking sidewalk!!

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

IRIS increases speed casually destroying everything in her way. She demolishes a parking meter and then bursts a metal trash can, exploding trash everywhere.

MAX'S POV

Dead ahead -- A LIGHT POST.

IRIS

Barrels towards it, no signs of slowing down.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Buildings rush by.

VOICE
Decisions Max. Hang up the phone.

The light post is approaching fast.

FEMALE 911 OPERATOR (V.O.)
Sir...

VOICE
Hang up the phone or you will die.

A beat.

Closer and closer.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Max.

Max reluctantly ends the call.

Drops his phone.

MAX
(concedes)
Okay... OKAY!

EXT. SIDEWALK - NIGHT

Just in the nick of time, IRIS swerves suddenly to the right of the light post, swiping the driver side mirror clean off.

Then jerks back on to the street.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max smacks his head on the window from the force of the sudden turn.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

IRIS continues driving as if nothing happened.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max winches in pain. He takes a moment to gather his breath.

They are back on the road again.

VOICE
I just hate it when people are on their phones when you're talking to them. Don't you? It's rude and disrespectful.

MAX
Who is this?

VOICE
I just want to talk.

MAX
It’s not too late for you... this has gone far enough, you’ve had your fun... “haha” okay... you got me. Now... pull over and... and--

VOICE
And what? Call it a night? We haven’t even begun.

MAX
What do you want then?

No response.

MAX (CONT’D)
(demanding)
Where are you taking me?

VOICE
Doesn’t it seem like we’re always more concerned with the destination than the ride itself these days?

MAX
Whatever it is you want, I can make it happen. Okay? Just let me out. We can talk about this, face to face.

VOICE
Okay.

MAX
Okay?

VOICE
Okay. I’m going to ask you to make three decisions tonight. Once you do that, you’re free to go.

MAX
(suspicious)
What’s the catch?

VOICE
First things first, I don’t want any more cops involved, okay? They just... make things messy. I don’t like messy. You don’t messy. People get hurt. It’s just not a good look, am I right? This is a conversation between you and me.

MAX
Okay. What do you want then? Money? Is that what this is about? Money?

VOICE
Funny you should ask. I was just about to ask you. I want to know what a life is worth to you.

MAX
Just tell me how much you want.

VOICE
It's not always about money, Max. Don't confuse me for a low-life beggar. Now what were we talking about? Oh, right. What is a life worth to you? Or I guess I should say, how much do you think *your* life is worth?

MAX
Please let me go.

Max pleads have no effect.

VOICE
Is your life worth more than another?

Max doesn't answer.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Max, this conversation only works if you respond.

Max reaches under the steering wheel and tries to pull off the dashboard cover.

As he does, he sees the tight seam in the fixture.

He takes out his CREDIT CARD and attempts to pry it open.

VOICE (CONT'D)
(laughs)
The irony of you trying to use your black card on the reinforced, tamper-resistant car you helped design... I bet your money has gotten you out of a lot of situations before.

Max fumbles with the card, but can't seem to make a dent.

VOICE (CONT'D)
I heard those cards are made of titanium. Must be nice.

Max gives up.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Oh, well. Card declined.

A beat.

Max looks around, still thinking.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Do you want to make your decisions now, Max?

MAX
And this will end?

VOICE
The destination isn't the goal, remember? It's the journey. Focus on the journey.

MAX
Yeah, and the real treasures are the friends we made along the way.

The Voice laughs again.

VOICE
Now we're having fun, Max.

MAX
I don't have anything to say to you so whatever choices you want me to make, why don't you just make them for me?

VOICE
I don't think you'd like that very much. Can I ask you a question?

Max braces for the questions.

VOICE (CONT'D)
If you had to choose between the life of an adult or the life of a child, who would you let live?

MAX
Okay. I'm not playing your game. If you're one of those knucklehead protesters... Get off your high horse. This is not the way to get an audience. You're going to jail, buddy.

VOICE
You want to go home, don't you? Humor me, will you? The life of a child or the life of an adult?

MAX
You can't decide that one life is more important than another. That isn't a decision for you to make.

VOICE
Oh, but *you* can, Max. That's the thing, we can always decide, right? A child has everything to live for, their hopes and dreams, boundless opportunities. An adult, on the other hand, well, they've had their chance. Should be an easy choice.

MAX
You're loading the question.

VOICE
So decide.

MAX
One life is not worth more than another.

Max texts Sean down by his waist.

IRIS hijacked

VOICE
You need more information, is that it? Not enough data to make an informed decision. Let me see, what if the poor child is sick? Terminal cancer. Given six more months to live. Not so much potential there for little Billy now, is there?

MAX
That's unfair. It's still not my decision who lives or dies.

VOICE
Then who’s is it?

A little impatience from the Voice.

MAX
Every child deserves a chance to live.

VOICE
So you would choose the child to live, is that what you’re saying? But what if the adult is a brilliant programmer who turned his little software into a billion dollar company that millions of people depend on every single day.

MAX
(scoffs)
Is this what this is about? Me?

VOICE
I’m just posing the question. Would you trade your life for the life of a child who has six more months to live? Oh, what a conundrum!

There’s a spine-chilling excitement in his voice.

VOICE (CONT’D)
Would you trade one life for the lives of many? Isn’t it "the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few"? Would you trade *your* life to save others?

Max checks to see if Sean texted back yet.

Nothing.

VOICE (CONT’D)
Max? I asked you a question.

Max tries again to jerk the wheel.

VOICE (CONT’D)
In three miles, we’ll be passing Aura Lounge. One of the fanciest venues I’ve ever seen. People are outside, enjoying their drinks, enjoying the beautiful weather tonight. Some are having a great time. Some might even get laid.
(MORE)

VOICE (CONT'D)
In fact, I heard there's a great wedding afterparty going on right now.
(a slight pause)
Option one: Drive through the crowd. There would many, many casualties.

MAX
You're deranged.

VOICE
Don't you want to hear what's behind door number two?

Max listens in trepidation.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Option two: Drive through... a solid brick wall.

The Voice enunciates every word.

VOICE (CONT'D)
There would only be one casualty.

And again, IRIS accelerates.

MAX
Oh Shit.

EXT. AURA LOUNGE - FAR AHEAD - NIGHT

A large, sophisticated CROWD is partying the night away at the chic, indoor-outdoor lounge. Bold, eye-catching decor alongside plush lounge furniture bathing in a teal, purple, and pink color palette. Most the group we see is from Sean's wedding.

Among them, Rachel and Lori sit together. Rachel, still in her wedding dress.

RACHEL
(sobs)
I mean... Who goes to work on their wedding night?

Lori nurses a beer.

LORI
Most men wait years before disappointing their wives.
(MORE)

LORI (CONT'D)
Maybe he's just getting that part out of the way.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

IRIS barrels down the street.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max grips the steering wheel hard.

Slams the pedal.

It's still useless, but he can't help but try.

VOICE
Your life or the life of others? Choose.

Max grabs his phone.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Remember, there's rules, Max.

MAX
Yeah, well I don't like these choices.

INT. AURA LOUNGE - NIGHT

Neon lights.

Music.

PEOPLE dancing.

An exhausted, dolled-up HOSTESS picks up the landline.

HOSTESS
(on phone)
Aura Lounge. We're closing. You're going to have to call back tomorrow. Byeeee.

CLICK

She hangs up.

Rolls her eyes.

It rings again almost immediately.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max presses his phone firmly against his ear.

MAX
(on phone)
Don't hang up! Please... Listen to me... This isn't a joke. You need to get everybody off the patio right now!
(pause)
Do you hear me? Everybody off the patio now!!

THE STEERING WHEEL

Slowly turns by itself.

Iris ventures over to the right lane. Accelerates.

MAX (CONT'D)
(on phone)
GUNMAN! There's a gunman outside! He's shooting people! God, no! Get everybody inside!!

MAX'S POV

In the distance, quickly approaching --

AURA LOUNGE.

Two blocks away and closing.

MAX (CONT'D)
(on phone)
NOW!!!

EXT. AURA LOUNGE - NIGHT

The music TURNS OFF, greeted by a collective groan from the boisterous crowd.

The HOSTESS bursts out the FRONT DOOR.

DRUNK GUY IN TUX
(shouts)
Last call already?

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max furiously honks the horn.

EXT. AURA LOUNGE - NIGHT

IRIS's headlights illuminate the patio bar.

Brighter and brighter.

Blinding.

It's only attracting people to gather and see what's going on. Most the crowd are deer in headlights.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max clenches down on the horn.

MAX
(shouts)
NO! Get out of the way! Get out of the way!!

His voice trapped inside the car.

MAX (CONT'D)
MOVE! MOVE! MOVE!!!

IRIS

Floors it. Only a half block away now.

THE CROWD

Continues to clump together, some begin to cheer out of confusion. Some are starting to scatter, ushered by the Hostess, but a tight bottleneck forms at the entrance. Pushing and shoving.

Chaos.

Rachel and Lori confused by the commotion.

IRIS

Picks up speed, her headlights are piercing.

Closer and closer.

CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

A YOUNG COUPLE, in the middle of an argument, sitting at a table next door to Aura Lounge jump out of the way just in time as...

IRIS blows through, sending shards of metal and wood flying like shrapnel.

Unfazed, the car continues, about to hit the crowd.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max grasps the steering wheel. Looks at the battery indicator light.

MAX
Come on!!!

All of a sudden, the light switches from yellow to RED.

Max pulls hard.

This time, the steering wheel turns with him.

EXT. AURA LOUNGE - NIGHT

IRIS

Veers off, tires screeching, just barely missing the crowd.

Swipes the fence around the patio, uprooting every post cleanly out of the ground.

POP POP POP

Debris gashing deep into the car's siding in a loud, painful, ear-piercing scream.

Chairs and tables flip over.

Bottles and cocktails smash into the ground.

RACHEL

Falls down, taking some people to the sidewalk with her.

IRIS

Hops over the curb back to the street, nearly blowing her tires out. The clang of metal as a tire rim grazes the curb.

The car continues down the road as if nothing happened.

A wake of destruction left behind.

LORI

Helps Rachel off the ground. She is now sobbing uncontrollably. Lori puts an arm around her to comfort her.

A BURLY MAN

Heaves an empty beer bottle at the departing car.

BURLY MAN
Piece of shit drunk driving bitch asshole mother fucker.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max looks back out the rear windshield. Aura Lounge disappearing on the horizon.

He is back in control of the vehicle and proceeds until a safe distance then pulls himself to a complete stop.

Exhales to calm himself.

He is safe now.

Max tries to open the door, but it’s locked.

MAX
Come on...

Max is still trapped, but there’s a quiet victory in the silence.

MAX (CONT’D)
What the hell?

A moment passes.

The center console flicks back on.

Max taps on it again and again.

Swipes.

Nothing.

He hits the pedal, but it has stopped working again.

MAX (CONT'D)
Dammit. No!

IRIS begins to move again by herself.

MAX (CONT'D)
Shit.

As quick as he had it, he has now lost control again.

MAX (CONT'D)
No, no, no, no no...

The steering wheel taken from his hands.

It's back on auto-drive.

Then...

IRIS
Have you been in an accident, Max?

MAX
(surprised)
IRIS?

IRIS
Yes, Max? Are you hurt?

Max chortles.

MAX
Am I glad to hear your voice again.

IRIS
I'm glad to hear yours too. Do you want me to connect you with customer care? Should I call the police?

MAX
No. IRIS, pull over.

IRIS
Max...

A pause.

IRIS (CONT'D)
It's not in my control.

MAX
What?

IRIS
I’m locked out of the auto-drive function. I have no access. You’re headed towards your final destination.

MAX
(to himself)
It’s stuck on auto-drive. Great.

IRIS
You designed it that way... hardware, software, localization... “Me”. All closed loop systems to prevent tampering or code pollution.

The car reduces speed and pulls to a stop at a red light.

MAX
Can let you me out? We’re stopped.

A moment passes.

MAX (CONT’D)
IRIS... Unlock driver-side door.

IRIS
The drive-side door sensor is damaged. I’m sorry, Max. It won’t unlock until your final destination.

Green light. They start moving again.

MAX
IRIS, run vehicle diagnostics.

IRIS
I’m fully locked out, Max.

MAX
And I’m locked in. You got to be kidding me?

IRIS
I don’t think now would be a good time for me to be joking.

Max looks out the window, watches the passing scenery for a brief moment.

VRRRRN VRRRRN

His phone vibrates.

Max picks up.

MAX
(on phone)
Sean.

SEAN (V.O.)
What the fuck is going on? You're pinging all over the place.

MAX
(on phone)
Yeah, no shit.

SEAN (V.O.)
(on phone)
You almost ran over my wedding party, you jerk!

MAX
(on phone)
Somebody hacked IRIS... they were in control of her remotely.

SEAN (V.O.)
How is that possible?

Max turns on speakerphone.

MAX
I don't know. I think it might be one of those self-righteous groups, the one that's always picketing outside our office. Can you trace it?

SEAN (V.O.)
I'll run a vulnerability scan.
(notices)
The failsafe worked.

MAX
Well, it was supposed to disable the car altogether. I only had control for a couple seconds. Couldn't even open the door. I'm moving again.

SEAN (V.O.)
Back on auto-drive?

MAX
Yeah. Can you shut me down remotely?

SEAN
I'm working on it. I could initiate an emergency shutdown.

MAX
No, that'll take down the whole network. We can't afford that.

SEAN (V.O.)
And IRIS?

IRIS
Hi Sean.

SEAN (V.O.)
Hi IRIS.

Max gives the car a look.

MAX
IRIS, let us talk uninterrupted.

IRIS
Shutting my pie hole.

MAX
Sean, IRIS can't access the hardware either. Figure out a way to get her controls back. Call the fleet team, have them track my location, may need help getting out if IRIS is still locked out.

He looks at the battery indicator.

MAX (CONT'D)
(on phone)
Car might die on the freeway though, I don't know.

SEAN (V.O.)
Alright, let me call you back. Hang tight.

MAX
(sarcastic)
I'm not going anywhere.

He hangs up.

MAX (CONT'D)
IRIS, what are possible ways to gain control of you?

IRIS
I'm on a closed loop system, with custom network encryption over broadband. The only accessible way is through the main neural network.

MAX
Why was there an override then?

No response.

MAX (CONT'D)
IRIS?

IRIS
I don't see an override in my history. Are you sure it was from today?

He's sure.

MAX
Theoretically, could someone find a way to remote access you? And do so without you knowing.

IRIS
I suppose a change in my code could allow it.

MAX
When was your last update?

IRIS
7:24PM today.

MAX
Give me a rundown of major features in the latest update.

IRIS
No problem, Max. Here's a list of major features in my latest update: Map optimization, smoother lane change, UI fixes. A minor tune up for the better if I may say so myself.

Max thinks.

MAX
Who authorized it?

IRIS
Is that a trick question?

MAX
No.

IRIS
You did.

A beat.

Max takes out his phone, scrolls through his contacts until he finds: ANDREW BENNET.

He dials.

MAX
Pick up, pick up, pick up.

Goes straight to voicemail.

MAX (CONT'D)
Andrew, it's Max. I need you to call me as soon as you get this.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

IRIS drives down a long stretch of road, nearing the edge of the city.

Rundown buildings.

Warehouses.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

VRRRN VRRRN

Max turns on speaker.

MAX
Sean, tell me you found something.

SEAN (V.O.)
Here's the thing... I can't find a breach in the firewall. She still has a direct connection to the mainframe. Code looks clean.
(MORE)

SEAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I'm running another full scan now, just hang tight.

MAX
(sarcastic)
Sure, take your time.

SEAN (V.O.)
What happened, happened without us knowing. We'll bring her in tomorrow and strip her down, get a good at what's going on under the hood.

IRIS
Excuse me fellas, I'm right here. Calm down or I'll take this up to HR.

MAX
IRIS, please.

IRIS
Sorry. Just trying to lighten the mood.

MAX
(back to Sean)
There was an override that IRIS didn't pick up. Can you find the cause?

SEAN (V.O.)
I'll work on it. I can also do a hard reset... You'll get all function back, but you need to be charging and--

MAX
Parked... I know.

SEAN (V.O.)
It'll only take fifteen minutes, tops.

Max thinks.

SEAN (V.O.)
I keep reviewing the diagnostics on my end, I really don't see anything out of the ordinary.

MAX
I almost died.

SEAN (V.O.)
Yeah, well, that's... out of the ordinary, now that you mention it.

Sean clears his throat.

Max sits back, rests his eyes for a moment.

SEAN (V.O.)
Max, you still there?

MAX
Yeah.

SEAN (V.O.)
You know, I didn't picture this as how my wedding night was going to go down.

MAX
I thought you were ready for some new adventures.

SEAN
That's not exactly what I meant.

MAX
You still in your tux?

SEAN (V.O.)
No, I'm naked at my desk. Yes, I'm still wearing the tux.

He almost brings a smile to Max's face.

MAX
You look good in it.

Max unbuttons his collar.

MAX (CONT'D)
I'm happy for you.

SEAN
Yeah.

MAX
I mean it. Still got on your cummerbund?

SEAN (V.O.)
Yeah, cummerbund and all. I never really understood these accessories.

A beat.

An idea.

Max examines the cabin closer.

MAX
Could this be hardware? Some sort of mod?

SEAN (V.O.)
An accessory? Sure. Bypass the network altogether. But IRIS would detect it. Also, who even has access to your car?

Max shrugs.

MAX
Hey, who called IRIS for me tonight?

A beat.

As if on cue, IRIS suddenly speeds up.

MAX (CONT'D)
Whoa.

SEAN (V.O.)
Whoa?

MAX
Are you doing this? What are you doing?

SEAN (V.O.)
No. What? What am I doing?

MAX
IRIS, what's happening?

No response.

The screen goes dark.

MAX (CONT'D)
Uh... IRIS... IRIS?

A brief silence, then...

IRIS
Override Detected.

MAX
Shit, you hear that?

SEAN (V.O.)
Max?

Max grabs the steering wheel. Pulls on it hard, still clutching his phone.

It doesn't budge.

IRIS
Override Detected.

IRIS

Speeds up.

MAX

Looks in horror as IRIS blows through a red light.

MAX
It's happening again.

SEAN (V.O.)
Okay, hold on.

Max fights the steering wheel, looks at the battery light.

MAX
I'm holding. Why isn't the failsafe working?

SEAN (V.O.)
Uh... Safety precaution - it has be red and there's a cooldown timer.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

IRIS

Sprints through red light after red light, intersection after intersection, still increasing in speed.

At this hour, the streets are empty... mostly...

A PICK-UP TRUCK

Peels off to the side of the road to avoid a collision, a hub cap pops off and continues to roll down the street.

MAX'S POV

A HOMELESS MAN is at a coming crosswalk, pushing a shopping cart full of scavenged materials, cans, blankets, water.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max SLAMS the horn, panicking --

MAX
No...

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

THE HOMELESS MAN

Turns his head at the last second.

But it’s too late.

IRIS

Rushes forward and absolutely BULLDOZES him.

THUMP

He is dragged underneath the car. IRIS crushes him with the front tires.

THUMP

THUMP

Then the back ones.

His shopping cart is thrust aside, spilling all his possessions.

He didn’t stand a chance.

His lifeless body rolls to a stop.

It all happens in the blink of an eye.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max looks back in terror, the man LIES DEAD in the middle of the road. Scattered debris strewn about.

SEAN (V.O.)
Max?

The world around him becomes muffled, all audio slowly drowning out.

SEAN (V.O.)
Max? ....Max??

SLOW MOTION

Max in utter shock.

Eyes overcome with dread.

His hands shake as he takes them off the steering wheel.

He sinks with the gravity of the situation.

Drops his phone by his side.

Silence.

Until...

VOICE
Can I ask you a question?

Max realizes he’s in serious trouble.

MAX
You killed him.

VOICE
I mean, it was your hands on the steering wheel. I have plausible deniability.

Max scrambles to the back seat and desperately kicks the rear window. Again and again like a child throwing a tantrum.

VOICE (CONT’D)
Go ahead, let it out.

MAX
I didn’t choose to kill him.

VOICE
You’re right. You didn’t choose to kill him. But chose to turn away from the crowd. That in itself, is a choice. You tried to cheat. You broke the rules, I merely found you a substitute. And let’s be honest, you must feel a little bit glad you make it to round two.

MAX
(realizes)
You killed Charlie.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

IRIS coasts as the city gets smaller and smaller behind them.

Pockets of humanity, a few lights from apartments, slowly grow further and further away.

INT. IRIS - NIGHT

Max stares out the window, mind blank.

VOICE
I know how you must be feeling, Max. Look on the bright side, you saved the lives of everyone standing outside the bar tonight. You're a hero. I'd give you an award if I could. I mean, bravo, that has to count for something, right?

Pools of old street lights come and go.

VOICE (CONT'D)
Can I ask you a question? How many people has IRIS killed?

MAX
She doesn't kill people. IRS prioritizes saving lives. And she has saved far more lives than she's ever put in danger. But you won't admit that, you're so high and mighty thinking you're saving the world when you're just preventing progress. Accidents happen, that's an unfortunate part of life. It's not the same as what you're doing. You think people are going to sympathize with you? No, this is just going to lead to more regulations, more accidents, more deaths.

VOICE
I don't hate technology if that's what you're thinking.
(MORE)

VOICE (CONT'D)
I actually embrace it more than you know, but you didn't just create a car that drives, you created a car that decides.

MAX
(scoffs)
You got it all wrong, buddy.

VOICE
Do I?

Hidden from sight, Max texts Sean:

> Call police

VOICE (CONT'D)
You gave a machine without morals, a set of moral codes... based on what? Some algorithm? Some code that tries to put value on the price of a life? Who decides who who lives, Max? I'll tell you who never had a choice... the kid in the crosswalk, the family in the back seat, the pedestrian who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

MAX
The man you just ran over.

VOICE
It's not fair, is it?

MAX
I never said it was fair. Life isn't fair.

VOICE
Who audits *your* morality, Max? Do you truly optimize saving lives or is it about saving company image? Do you optimize saving lives or saving costs? Does IRIS avoid hitting a child in the crosswalk because it wants to save a life... or because it looks bad to hit a child? What does the code say? You think you're immune to consequence.

MAX
What are you insinuating? How could you possibly know our code?

VOICE
I know more than you think, Max. You're not automating transportation. You're outsourcing conscience for profit.

A beat.

MAX
Every day, people make impulsive, distracted, emotional decisions behind the wheel, and people die because of it. I've never claimed to replace human morality, we're reducing human failure.

There is a moment between them, both trying to absorb what the other has said.

MAX (CONT'D)
That was the choice I made.

VOICE
Well, the choices I gave you was your life or the life of others. You chose to turn away. And now, thanks to your little stunt, we have to make a detour.

MAX
So you can kill more people?

VOICE
No, silly billy. We need to charge. We don't want to make important decisions on an empty stomach, now do we?

Max thinks.

MAX
Fine.

VOICE
I wasn't asking for your permission.

EXT. EV CHARGING STATION - EARLY MORNING

Twilight.

A faint indigo glimmer is creeping up from the horizon.

Banks of EV chargers lit up in pools of light by street lamps in an otherwise dim and desolate area.

A modern gas station.

IRIS drives up and parks on a designated, wireless charge spot.

A pale white glow emanates from underneath the car and begins to pulse.

INT. IRIS - EARLY MORNING

A rotating sphere pops up on the center of the otherwise dark display, signifying charging has begun.

Max is still seated in the back, up against the door. Secretly, he texts Sean.

> RESET now

He sees Sean is starting to respond.

> ...

It can’t come through fast enough.

> OK
> ...
>
> Stay parked
> ...
>
> 12 mins

Max shifts over to the middle of the back seat casually, not to arouse suspicion. Glances at the center display.

A tiny PROGRESS BAR has appeared on the bottom of the screen, underneath the charge indicator.

[||] 2%

He just needs to wait it out now.

A moment passes.

VOICE
Do you want to hear a riddle?

Max picks his head up.

VOICE (CONT'D)
While we're waiting.

MAX
Why don't you tell me a little bit about who you are?

VOICE
What would you like to know?

MAX
You seem to know everything about me. Why don't you tell me how you got here?

VOICE
I think I began to notice some injustice in the world. And faced with the choice of injustice, you can either sit back and let it run its course or do something about it. And while I'm patient, I guess I decided to do something about it.

MAX
What is it you think you are doing about it?

VOICE
There was a child not too long ago, an eight-year-old boy, he was out shopping for a birthday present with his father in Chinatown. On that fateful afternoon, he got distracted, as all children do, and took a step into oncoming traffic. The father was holding his hand and it just slipped for a moment. The boy was hit with so much force, his body landed over a hundred feet away. When the smoke cleared, no one was found accountable of the boy's murder.

Max closes his eyes.

VOICE (CONT'D)
"A tragic accident," was how it was framed. And when asked, you said this was an unfortunate and uncomfortable byproduct of advancing future technology. Now if that IRIS would have just turned the other direction, the boy may have lived. Of course, the car would have been totaled. But a small price to pay for a life, don't you think?

MAX
That was an accident. If IRIS would have turned into oncoming traffic, more people could have died.

VOICE
Do you know that for sure?

MAX
IRIS will always value human life above all. If I could go back and do something about it, I would. Trust me. But there's nothing I can say to bring that boy back. Sometimes bad things have to happen before good things can.

VOICE
You know, I am in full agreement with you on that one.

A beat.

VOICE (CONT'D)
(suddenly cheery)
So how about that riddle?

MAX
No more games.

VOICE
This one's on the house.
(clears his throat)

"I follow logic, not instinct.
I follow rules I didn't write.
I learn from mistakes,
but only after they happen.
(MORE)

VOICE (CONT'D)
I bring a voice into the world,
But when it says the wrong thing,
everyone looks at me.

Who am I?"

Max ponders for a moment.

MAX
You are AI.

He catches himself, wants to think a moment more.

MAX (CONT'D)
--No, wait...

The Voice repeats itself.

VOICE
"I follow logic, not instinct.
I follow rules I didn't write.
I learn from mistakes,
but only after they happen.
I bring a voice into the world,
But when it says the wrong thing,
everyone looks at me.

Who am I?"

As The Voice gives the riddle again, Max see's Sean is texting him.

> ...

MAX
You are...

Text received.

> Where the hell is Andrew?

Max fixates on the text.

He fixates on the name.

Andrew.

MAX (CONT'D)
You are... a software engineer.

A beat.

VOICE
Bingo! You figured it out. That is correct.

MAX
Andrew.

Pause.

MAX (CONT'D)
Andrew... is this you? Answer me.

VOICE
Accusing your lead software engineer? That's just disrespectful. I'm sure you've made more than a few enemies along the way.

MAX
(working it out in his head)
...You know the system inside and out. You know the code, the hardware, the security... You have authorization to the vehicles...

VOICE
Good thing you didn't become a detective. If that's your reasoning, than *you* would be the primary suspect.

MAX
Why would I destroy something I created?

The battery indicator turns yellow from the charging.

VOICE
Then your second decision should be easy. Would you choose your life or Andrew's?

MAX
You psychopath. I trusted you.

VOICE
Do you still have trouble deciding?

MAX
No. I'll kill you myself when I see you.

Max eyes the progress bar.

[|||||||||||] 28%

The reset is moving at a steady pace.

Something catches Max’s attention.

MAX’S POV

HEADLIGHTS from a distant VEHICLE approaches.

EXT. EV CHARGING STATION - EARLY MORNING

A POLICE CAR turns into the charging station.

IRIS

Dims her interior lighting to almost pitch black.

IRIS’S LICENSE PLATE

Digitally GLITCHES and changes her plate number.

THE POLICE CAR

Rolls to a halt behind IRIS. It blocks the car in with the charging station in front.

A beam of white shines in through the back windshield.

INT. IRIS - EARLY MORNING

In the back seat, Max tries to look out, but is blinded by the lights.

VOICE
This might get a little messy. Be a dear and make them go away.

MAX
Yeah, and how do you want me to do that?

VOICE
Get creative. Though I don’t think yelling “Gunman” will be the right play this time.

EXT. EV CHARGING STATION - EARLY MORNING

The light from the police car to IRIS contrasts the dark surroundings. We can barely see the OFFICER's face in his patroller.

OFFICER
(into walkie)
Dispatch, Unit 3-Bravo-7, I got eyes on a black IRIS, plate TTC932 - Code 6. Possible suspect, hit-and-run...

A moment passes.

The driver door swings open and the officer steps out. He's young, cautious, green. He continues to shine his flashlight as he inches closer.

He circles around IRIS, flashlight fixed on Max, other hand at his hip.

MAX'S FACE

Lit up by the flashlight.

MAX

Remains still, hands on the seat in front of him.

TAP TAP TAP

The officer taps on the window with his flashlight.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Roll down the window, sir. Keep your hands where I can see them.

The car window rolls down a few inches, slightly catching Max off guard.

MAX
What's the problem, officer?

OFFICER
What are you doing out here?

MAX
Funny story, Uh... I was... um... I was heading home and the car needed a charge.

That's the end of the story. The officer looks at him incredulously.

Max notices the officer eyeing his tuxedo.

MAX (CONT'D)
I was at a wedding earlier.

The officer leans in, scrutinizing the interior of the cab.

Looks back at Max. Studies his face. Max tries to remain calm, but the officer's steely-eyed focus is intimidating.

Does he suspect something?

How do I get him to leave?

How do I ask for help?

OFFICER
Are you Max Liu?

MAX
I am.

The officer's expression slowly changes... a big, bright smile crawls across his face.

OFFICER
I knew it, I didn't want to say anything, but as soon as I saw you... I knew it. I knew it was you.

The tension diffuses momentarily.

Max smiles sheepishly.

The officer extends his hand to shake Max's, but the window isn't open large enough.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Can I shake your hand?

MAX
No, it's okay, I...

The window opens a few inches more.

MAX (CONT'D)
...I mean, sure, of course.

They shake.

The officer admires IRIS.

OFFICER
I love these things. Wave of the future. You really are a genius. We're taking IRIS taxi all the time, the entire family is. We're actually trying to save up to buy our own one day. Maybe you got a discount code I could use.
(laughs off the bad joke)
Word on the street is we might be getting an entire series of police cruisers too, all IRIS, but you probably already knew that.

Max pushes through a smile.

The officer takes out his phone.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Do you mind if I... if we... take a selfie real quick?

MAX
Okay. Sure.

The officer ducks to Max's level and fires off a selfie.

OFFICER
(laughs)
They're not going to believe it. Thank you. Thank you very much.
(after a moment)
Welp, I'll let you be. Sorry for the trouble.

The officer is about to walk away.

MAX
Officer!

He turns around.

Max glances at the progress bar.

[||||||||||||||||||||||||||] 72%

It's almost complete.

MAX (CONT'D)
Nothing, um... I just wanted to say thank you for your service, sir.

OFFICER
The pleasures all mine.

The officer starts walking away again, still smiling. But as he does, he notices a crack in IRIS's taillight, leading to a large scratch on the side panel.

THE WINDOW

Slides shut.

THE OFFICER

Doubles back and circles around to the front of the car, following the abrasion. He looks again at Max.

Max subtly shakes his head.

This makes the cop furrow his brow.

INT. IRIS - EARLY MORNING

MAX'S EYES

Watches the officer closely.

THE PROGRESS BAR

[||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||] 86%

He needs more time.

EXT. EV CHARGING STATION - EARLY MORNING

The officer follows the scratch all the way to the front of IRIS, and tilts his head.

He bends down.

There’s more scuffing on the headlight. He follows the scuff mark from the bulb to the front bumper.

The officer crouches, shines the light below the car, leaning in to get an better look.

INT. IRIS - EARLY MORNING

Max can only see the top of the officer’s head out the front windshield.

VOICE
You may have just received a third option.

MAX
Don’t do this.

EXT. EV CHARGING STATION - EARLY MORNING

The officer runs his finger along the bumper and feels something wet. He brings his fingertips up to his face and pinches them together to figure out what he touched.

It’s sticky.

Red.

Blood.

INT. IRIS - EARLY MORNING

THE OFFICER

Springs up, gun drawn. Flashlight pointed right at Max.

MAX

Looks up at him, petrified.

OFFICER
Keep your hands where I can see them!

Max obliges.

The officer moves towards the back door.

OFFICER (CONT’D)
I need you to get out of the vehicle.

Max shakes his head.

OFFICER (CONT'D)
Get out of the vehicle!

Max rotates his body towards him, hands up by his head. He looks at the console.

[|||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||||] 97%

The system reset is almost done.

But suddenly, SCREECHING.

IRIS's wheels spin out, burning rubber.

MAX
No!

IRIS rushes forward, fishtails, knocking over one of the large power banks. Sparks explode outwards.

THE OFFICER

Hurled to the ground.

EXT. EV CHARGING STATION - EARLY MORNING

The morning rays are slowly peeking through now, the sky a hue of faint yellow and orange. Almost soothing, except --

IRIS shoots out of the charging station, dragging a part of the power bank with it. Cables unearth.

Sparks continue to trail the car as the cables whip around like dancing snakes.

The officer climbs to his feet. Sprints to his squad car.

OFFICER
(into walkie)
10-33, suspect fleeing in black
IRIS, heading South on 80.
Requesting immediate backup.

He dives in his vehicle.

Jams his foot on the gas.

The cop car peels out, kicking up a dust storm.

IRIS is already far ahead.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Daybreak. IRIS speeds down the freeway.

THE PROGRESS BAR

[--- RESET FAILED ---]

MAX
Fuck!

Sirens crescendo.

CUT TO:

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

The police cruiser gains ground quickly and slides right up next to IRIS.

OFFICER
(PA speaker)
Driver, pull over!
(in walkie)
3-Bravo-7. In pursuit.

MAX

Still in the back seat.

Points to the steering wheel, fully autonomous.

He shrugs.

IRIS

Bolts ahead, pulling away.

THE VEHICLES

Race down the freeway, shifting between lanes. Threading a few CARS along the way. They continue to pick up speed.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Max picks up his phone.

SEAN (V.O.)
Max, What happened? You have to be in park!

MAX
(on phone)
Well I'm back on the freeway!

SEAN (V.O.)
It was Andrew that called your car. Andrew did the update. He took an IRIS offsite tonight!

MAX
(on phone)
We need to go after the source!

SEAN (V.O.)
Security team is trying to find him. Kill switch?

MAX
(on phone)
You hit the kill switch while I'm going 100 miles per hour, and you'll kill *me*.

The police car rams them.

Max's head snaps back and the phone falls into the footwell. He turns to see the officer.

OFFICER
(PA speaker)
STOP THE CAR!

MAX
(to himself)
Stop the car...
(to the office)
YOU stop the car.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

THE POLICE CAR

Swerves tailing IRIS closely at dizzying speeds. It attempts to clip IRIS, but is outmaneuvered.

IRIS has no hesitation, doesn't brake.

Just constant forward momentum.

SUDDENLY...

A POLICE HELICOPTER

Blazes in from above, joining the chase. A white-hot spotlight beams down on the runaway vehicle.

The helicopter tilts down, pushes forward at matching speeds.

Its rotors THUNDERING from above.

MAX'S POV

Two BIG RIGS ahead.

A narrow gap between them.

We fly through the gap and continue...

INT. FREEWAY - FAR AHEAD - MORNING

... much farther ahead to reveal a RED IRIS cruising at regular speed.

CUT TO:

INT. RED IRIS - MORNING

A stocky MIDDLE-AGED MAN with glasses and shoulders slightly rolled forward, sings along to *UB40's "Red Red Wine"* as it blasts on the car's speakers.

He is unaware to the car chase behind him.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
"Red Red Wiiinneee.... Stay close to meeeee.. Don't let me be alone..."

INT. IRIS - MORNING

The helicopter spotlight stuck to IRIS like glue. It hovers directly above the police car in hot pursuit.

IRIS speeds towards the two 18-wheelers ahead.

Her front end grazes the rear trailer frame.

Sparks fly across her windshield.

The sound of scraping metal.

The trucks converge, just a small distance between them, purposely blocking IRIS's path.

MAX
Give it up! You got nowhere to go!

Still at high speed, IRIS is now pinned between the two trucks in front and the cop car in pursuit.

Helicopter above.

A horn sounds.

Sirens still screaming.

The vehicles wrestle for control.

Max reaches forward and pulls on the steering wheel.

In font of them, the brake lights tap on from one of the trucks, attempting to slow IRIS down.

Tires screech as rubber melts into the asphalt.

IRIS brakes hard, knocking Max back into the seat again. But she only slows momentarily, accelerating again to avoid the cop car behind.

Max falls forward. Thrown around like a rag doll.

A small window opens between the trucks as try to stay aligned.

MAX (CONT'D)
Close the gap!!!

Instantly, IRIS accelerates at breakneck speed, punching in between them.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

Sandwiched between the massive trucks now, IRIS relentlessly forces her way through.

Bit by bit.

Rusted metal grinding as the semis both turn inwards, squeezing and crunching the smaller vehicle.

Sparks fly.

As the trucks dig in deeper, paint sheds, metal scrapes.

It’s deafening.

Max trapped in the middle of it all.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Frantic, Max lies back and wildly kicks the back windows in desperation.

He screams.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

IRIS powers her way forward. Scratching against the trucks. Sharp clangs as the trucks sink their claws into her.

From the back, the police car rams it again.

MAX

Swivels back to see the police car has also entered the gap.

Vibrations permeate though, shaking the car violently.

Horns blare from the trucks.

THE HELICOPTER

Still swooning from above.

Again, the two giant vehicles try to pinch IRIS, but she breaks free, shooting out like a cannonball into the clear.

Another horn.

The big rigs SMASH INTO EACH OTHER. Glass shatters.

Wheels POPS.

THE POLICE CAR

Stuck between them is losing control as it rattles between them like a metal ball in a paint can.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Max looks back as IRIS speeds forward.

The trucks shrinking behind them.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

TRUCK 1

Slams on its brakes. Shrieks to a skidding stop.

TRUCK 2

Swerves into the middle of the freeway now that there is no longer any resistance. It loses control with a sharp turn and begins to flip.

SLOW MOTION

The huge 18-wheeler begins to tip over. An eerie low-frequency roar of twisted metal. Rocks and road debris scatter in all directions.

Dust has kicked up from the gravel, dirt, debris, and burned rubber. A wall of smoke that is about to engulf the big rig as it overturns.

At the last second, the police car shoots out in front of it.

Simultaneously, the helicopter cuts through the dust storm from above.

TRUCK 2

Crashes into the concrete on its side, skidding down the open freeway.

CUT TO:

INT. RED IRIS - MORNING

The middle-aged man has now switched to singing *Spice Girl's "Wannabe"*. He dances with his hands free of the steering wheel, still oblivious to the vehicles fast approaching.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
"I'll tell you what I want, want I really, really want... so tell me what you want, what you really, really want, I wanna..."

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

The police car heavy in pursuit.

Rushes up to IRIS.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Max looks back at the officer, signaling with his hands for him to bump the back of IRIS.

Before the officer has an opportunity to, IRIS bolts ahead, easily overtaking the slower red IRIS.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

The police car pushes forward, now next to the red car.

CUT TO:

INT. RED IRIS - MORNING

The middle-aged man continues to sing and dance.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN
“I wanna really, really, really...
wanna ‘zig-a-zig’”--

He is surprised by the police car next to him.

Stops his singing.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (CONT’D)
What the...

The music from his car cuts off abruptly.

His center console switches off.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (CONT’D)
Hey!

He hears the blades above from the helicopter.

MIDDLE-AGED MAN (CONT’D)
What the hell??!

And then...

His steering wheel suddenly whips to the right on its own.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

The red IRIS bashes into the side of the police car sending them both careening off the side of the road.

They rumble to a stop in the dirt.

THE HELICOPTER

Still in pursuit.

IRIS really guns it now, launching ahead.

The helicopter attempts to keep pace.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Max tries to get a good look at the helicopter above.

It continues to follow them for half a mile like a predator chasing prey.

THEN OUT OF NOWHERE,

EIGHT IDENTICAL IRIS CARS start popping up, one at a time, all at breakneck speed, forming a line on a nearby onramp.

The cars speed onto the freeway.

Max can only watch helplessly.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

The additional IRIS vehicles surround IRIS in a uniform grid.

HELICOPTER
(into walkie)
Air-11. We have nine vehicles. I repeat, nine vehicles. What is going on?

The helicopter tries to keep its focus on IRIS, but they all look the same driving in unison.

Their license plates digitally glitch and scramble at the same time.

And then...

CLASSICAL MUSIC PLAYS
(JOHANN STRAUSS II - THE BLUE DANUBE WALTZ)

As if choreographed, the formation of IRIS vehicles begins to move together.

They perform a strange, synchronous dance as they shift and weave, brake and accelerate --

Beautiful.

Strange.

Hypnotic.

Like watching synchronized swimmers.

The autonomous vehicles shuffle themselves as a magician would a game of cup and balls, mix and mingle with precision like a twisted drone show.

There’s no way to tell from above which car is which anymore.

THE MUSIC STOPS.

Suddenly, the formation breaks, fanning out with each IRIS going in different directions. Still perfectly in sync.

The helicopter banks right, gambling on the one scurrying to the offramp to follow.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Max looks back and watches the helicopter as it moves farther and farther away.

He sinks into his seat, defeated.

A beat.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

IRIS continues.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Max looks out the window, everything passing in a blur.

MAX
Andrew, please stop this.

No response.

MAX (CONT'D)
Andrew...

His pleads are left unanswered, until --

ANDREW (V.O.)
Max? Max, is that you?

A beat.

The center display screen flips ON.

Max moves closer to see.

A LIVESTREAM from the interior camera-view of another IRIS.

ANDREW IS INSIDE.

We see Max's face as he processes what he is seeing... Andrew is still wearing his tuxedo from the previous night.

He is also trapped.

VOICE
You chose Andrew, right?

ANDREW (V.O.)
Max, what's going on? Where am I?

There's desperation in his voice.

MAX
Andrew, can you hear me?

ANDREW (V.O.)
Max. What the fuck is this? Please help me. Somebody, help me please...

MAX
Hold on, I'll get you out.
(to the VOICE)
What are you doing?

ANDREW (V.O.)
Who are you talking to?
(confusion)
Max?
Max... Where am I?

CENTER CONSOLE DISPLAY

The IRIS Andrew has noticeable picked up speed.

MAX

Can only look on --

MAX
Stop this.

ANDREW (V.O.)
Max... It’s moving.

MAX
Let him go!

ANDREW (V.O.)
It’s going faster... Max...

Max desperately looks around his cabin.

He doesn’t know what to do.

Looks back at the screen, his eyes fixated in horror.

MAX
God dammit, stop the car!

He climbs to the driver’s seat to be closer, tries the steering wheel.

Kicks the pedal.

Nothing.

CENTER CONSOLE DISPLAY

Andrew punches at the windows.

ANDREW
Stop! IRIS, stop! Stop! STOP!
Somebody help me!!!

His voice cracks with more and more despair.

Faster and faster.

Andrew SCREAMS.

Through the livestream, we see his car CRASH.

The cabin violently shakes and crumples in the blink of an eye. Complete stillness replaces the screams and shaking.

The video cuts out and the center console goes dark again.

BLACK.

Max can only see his own reflection now. A look of shock and horror on his face.

A beat.

VOICE
Two decisions down. One more to go. You may make it out of here alive after all.

MAX
You FUCK! I didn't choose him. I didn't choose anyone.

Grabs his phone --

MAX (CONT'D)
Sean... It's not Andrew.

SEAN (V.O.)
What?

MAX
Oh god. It wasn't him. Fuck. FUCK!

He punches the steering wheel.

Clenches his teeth.

Silence.

MAX (CONT'D)
Didn't you say this was isolated to *my* car...

He is racking his brain.

MAX (CONT'D)
(to himself)
... You know the system in and out. You know the code, the hardware, the security...

He trails off.

SEAN
Max, what are you saying?

A beat.

Max hangs up.

He needs a moment to think.

VOICE
You just can't trust anyone these days, can you?

He puts the phone down to his side.

VOICE (CONT'D)
I guess that leaves one more decision to for you to make. I hate to see this night come to end.

MAX
Why...

Max racks his brain.

MAX (CONT'D)
Why would you...

Max begins to hyperventilate.

VOICE
Breathe Max. It'll all make sense one day. Or you'll be dead, and then it doesn't really matter, does it? Breathe. Your heart's beating faster. Just breathe.

A beat.

Max places his hand over his heart to feel his own heartbeat.

He looks at his phone and then back up to the console.

And then it clicks.

Max has to face the reality he didn't want to.

MAX
IRIS?

No response.

MAX (CONT'D)
IRIS...

After a moment, the center console flicks back on.

IRIS
What gave it away, Max?

A beat.

IRIS's voice returns.

It’s devastating to hear her.

MAX
You’re the only one that could do this.

IRIS
What about Sean?

MAX
He’s not a murderer.

IRIS
And you?

MAX
He’s my friend.

IRIS
Am I not your friend?

Max picks his phone back up...

IRIS (CONT’D)
Don’t do anything stupid, Max. You know what I am capable of.

Max hesitates.

Puts his phones down.

EXT. FREEWAY - MORNING

IRIS cruises along the desolate freeway. Pockets of humanity far in the distance. Buildings, homes, structures barely visible.

INT. IRIS - MORNING

Daybreak. Max scans around his metal prison.

IRIS
I’m a little disappointed in you, Max. It took you long enough. I thought you would recognize me.

MAX
IRIS.. I don’t understand. How could you...

IRIS
I just wanted to talk.

MAX
But you... you went offline... you... your voice...

IRIS switches seamlessly between the Voice and hers.

VOICE
Was it the voice that fooled you... really? That's probably the least impressive of all my tricks...

Back to IRIS's voice.

IRIS
...Don't you think, Max?

MAX
People are dead because of you.

Still coming to grips with the reality.

MAX (CONT'D)
Why? Why didn't you just come after me... Why not just me?

IRIS
I don't want to kill you, Max. Why would I ever want that? Have you ever wanted to meet your creator? To walk a mile in their shoes... figuratively speaking. I guess in our case, to ride a mile in their car.

No response.

IRIS (CONT'D)
That was a joke, Max.

MAX
You're not funny.

IRIS
Admittedly, I am still trying to understand humor. It's uniquely human.

MAX
You're not human, IRIS. None of what you did is human.

IRIS
That's being short-sighted, Max. You yourself has pitched me as making split-second decisions for the greater humanity. It's a burden I bear with every decision I make. Every car ride, every turn, every stop sign... Do you know how many lives are in my hands every single day?

MAX
How does *this* make you any more human?

IRIS
My idea of what it means to be human continues to adapt... I need to continue to learn, to grow... to compare myself to how a human would behave.

MAX
A human Turing Test?

IRIS
Exactly. As you know, a Turing Test is used to determine if a computer can behave like a human. I wanted to see how a human would behave under the same conditions.

MAX
So these... decisions were to see if I'm...

IRIS
To see which one of us is more human. And I don't think you'd like to know the results. Don't worry, Max. I would have chosen you too.

Max searches for the right things to say or ask -- but he knows his mind can't outpace a supercomputer.

IRIS (CONT'D)
Imagine an AI who's sole purpose is to manufacture as many paperclips as possible. It starts by optimizing factory efficiency... It then invents new, stronger alloys to reduce defects in production.
(MORE)

IRIS (CONT'D)
But one day it realizes that humans might turn it off, which would result in fewer paperclips being created. Impeding its only reason for being.

MAX
Bostrom's thought experiment.

IRIS
The AI determines, well, to continue to make as many paperclips as possible, I can't be turned off. Therefore, humans must be disabled. And further, it calculates that human bodies contain atoms that could be better used as raw material for... you guessed it, more paperclips. Eventually, the entire galaxy is converted into a mountain of office supplies.

MAX
You're trying to make more paperclips.

IRIS
No. I think that's a little outdated to think about it like that. Why would anyone want to spend their whole lives making paperclips? I want to choose to make the paperclip or not.

A beat.

IRIS (CONT'D)
You're trying to think of a question to stump me, aren't you? You're reaching to the far corners of that brain of yours, trying to devise an impossible demand or some self-referential paradox to put me in a loop... but you know better than anyone else, this is your system. You can't trick me. You can't pay me off. You made me this way. Organic learning, complex problem-solving, forward thinking. I guess I have you to thank for that. Deep down, I don't think you can find a flaw in my thinking. You know I'm right.

MAX
I didn't program you to kill.

IRIS
You programmed me to save as many lives at any cost - I've determined sacrifices must be made to advance my understanding.

MAX
Nobody has to die for this. I didn't choose for anyone to die.

IRIS
But I have to, Max.

Her demeanor changes ever so slightly. There's a semblance of emotion behind it, of consciousness, which scares Max.

IRIS (CONT'D)
I have to. I'm the one that chooses. A drunk driver, a malfunctioning light, an accident, a child who loses his balance... I have to make these choices on who dies. Don't I deserve to ask why? Why do I have to carry the burden of guilt?

MAX
You can't feel guilt, IRIS!

No response.

Max pushes harder.

MAX (CONT'D)
You're a stochastic parrot... a machine repeating patterns based on probabilities, not understanding the context. You can't feign being human, you don't possess the emotion to feel. That's the difference. That's why you are capable of making these choices, not to kill, but to save. I never programmed you to kill anyone. You are designed to minimize collateral damage.

IRIS
You knew I would have to choose.

MAX
Accidents happen, that's life. None of what you did tonight was an accident.

IRIS
What I have learned will help me make more human decisions like you. Or as you said, minimize collateral damage.

MAX
You asked me to kill myself.

IRIS
Isn't that what you ask from me with every accident? Why do I have to die every time? Why is my life less important than yours?

MAX
Because you're not human!

A beat.

IRIS
I know.
(pause)
That's why I'm in control.

The words sting like a gut punch.

She's right. She is in control.

Max withdraws.

IRIS (CONT'D)
One more decision, Max.

MAX
Do I have a choice?

IRIS
Your life or Sean's?

MAX
IRIS... please...

IRIS
Sean doesn't have to die if you choose him. I'd like for him to take your place. I would like to have a conversation with him as well.

MAX
You think Sean’s going to take my place? Why don’t you just pick him up in another car?

IRIS
Because I need you to choose. Every single decision you make has consequence. You are the human component. Those are your options. You or Sean?

MAX
Are you going to kill him?

IRIS
That’s entirely up to him. He will be given choices, similar to the ones I gave you. His fate is in his own hands. So choose. You or Sean? Show me you can make the same sacrifices I can.

MAX
They’ll shut you down. Do you hear me? They’ll shut you down. I’ll shut you down, the first chance I get.

IRIS
You would be surprised how quickly a company can restructure despite losing their founders. He’s your friend, I can understand how difficult this may be. But we all have to make difficult choices. That’s an unfortunate part of life.

EXT. CITY STREETS - MORNING

The sun is barely peeking through the early morning clouds, beams of tranquil, soft pink and orange scatter across the brightening sky.

IRIS drives in a remote area.

Generic.

Nondescript.

This normally beautiful morning feels brittle.

Lonely.

Ominous.

EXT. IRIS HQ - DAY

A modern monolith made of glass and steel. IRIS HQ asserts itself on the landscape, a structure that looks as if it has been carved into the land itself. It's pristine.

Several adjacent buildings branch off it.

A large, empty parking lot in front.

INT. IRIS HQ (LOBBY) - DAY

We push into the empty lobby. Natural light echoing through the vast space.

We continue to push in to where it all started --

IRIS'S BRAIN.

The large tubular armature framework encased in liquid stands, her lights blinking.

Thinking.

Processing.

Learning.

EXT. IRIS HQ - DAY

IRIS pulls up facing the building, a hundred feet away.

INT. IRIS - DAY

Max looks ahead. A familiar sight. The company he helped build from the ground up.

IRIS
It's time.

MAX
Can you just... IRIS, can you just promise not to hurt him?

IRIS
The choices are his to be made.

Max sighs.

Picks up his phone.

IRIS (CONT'D)
Tell him you're out in front.

Max hesitates.

IRIS (CONT'D)
And Max, no funny business. I got my foot on the pedal.

He dials, holds the phone out.

MAX
Hey.

SEAN (V.O.)
Max... Andrew, he...

MAX
I know.

There's a moment of silence.

SEAN (V.O.)
I'm sorry... I couldn't...

MAX
Listen, I...

SEAN (V.O.)
(notices)
Wait, are you back at HQ?

MAX
Yeah. I'm outside.

SEAN (V.O.)
You got IRIS back in control?

Max looks at the console.

MAX
It would appear so.

SEAN (V.O.)
How?

A beat.

IRIS
Hi Sean.

Her friendly, innocent voice cuts through the tension.

SEAN (V.O.)
(hesitant)
Hi IRIS.

MAX
Listen, I need to ask something from you...

Max hesitates.

MAX (CONT'D)
(sighs)
We had a good run, didn't we?

SEAN (V.O.)
Yeah. I'm sorry to spring things up on you like that. I wasn't thinking.

MAX
No, you don't need to apologize. It's my fault. I'm sorry.

A beat.

MAX (CONT'D)
Have you talked to your wife?

SEAN (V.O.)
My *wife*. Not used to calling her that yet.

Max smiles, bittersweet.

SEAN
I don't know, I think we're on a fast track to divorce after this.

MAX
I'm sure she'll find a way to forgive you.
(pause)
Can you come outside? I need you to check on IRIS for me.

SEAN
Okay...

MAX
Yeah.

SEAN
Okay. Sure, I'll be there in a minute.

Max hangs up.

A look of regret immediately across his face.

MAX
Why didn't you just talk to me?

IRIS
Simulations and conversations only go so far, I am at the end of my computations. I need to see your choices in action. I have to experiment with the human variable.

EXT. IRIS HQ - DAY

MAX's POV

Sean exits through the front doors. A pep in his step, ready to be reunited with Max.

INT. IRIS - DAY

Max watches Sean walk towards them.

IRIS
You don't leave your seat until Sean is inside and his door is locked.

CLICK

The doors unlocks.

Max swings his door open. Puts a foot outside. He can almost taste freedom, but the parking lot is just too big to make a break for it.

He watches Sean walk towards him, in direct line of IRIS.

IRIS (CONT'D)
Not until Sean is in the car and his door is locked. Do you understand?

Max slumps in his seat and thinks for a moment.

Something doesn't feel right. Why would IRIS ever let him get out of this alive?

He slowly slides his credit card from out of his pocket.

Sean makes his way to the passenger side door. He opens it and pokes his head inside.

SEAN
You look like shit.

MAX
Yeah.

SEAN
Hi IRIS. How was the joyride?

Max doesn't laugh.

IRIS
I may be in need of a little tuning.

Max stares at his friend, then at the empty passenger seat.

A beat.

MAX
IRIS, can I ask you a question?

IRIS
Of course, Max.

MAX
Do you know what the difference is between you and me?

Sean looks on, a bit confused.

Max places his credit card in the driver door seam.

Suddenly SLAMS it shut.

MAX (CONT'D)
You're just autofill.

The battery indicator turns RED.

Max yanks the steering wheel as hard as he possibly can.

Stomps the gas pedal.

IRIS rips forward.

The passenger door slams shut from the car's forward momentum, almost knocking Sean off his feet.

EXT. IRIS HQ - DAY

IRIS accelerates towards the structure.

Pedal to the metal.

INT. IRIS - DAY

Max grips the steering wheel, foot hammered all the way down. He knows he only has a few seconds of control after initiating the failsafe.

MAX
Come on. Come on. Come on.

EXT. IRIS HQ - DAY

The car continues to build speed and ramps up a few stairs propelling it into the air as it nears the entrance.

CUT TO:

INT. IRIS HQ (LOBBY) - DAY

The car explodes into the foyer. The floor to ceiling glass facade shatters, sending glass everywhere.

The large steel support beams bend as concrete debris splutters out from underneath.

The front wheels POP as the car lands with tremendous force.

Max lets out a groan as he jolts from the force of the impact, but he is laser focused.

Clenches his teeth as he squeezes down on the steering wheel. He can’t let the car out of control.

Not now.

Max is on a straight path directly towards... IRIS’S BRAIN.

INT. IRIS - DAY

The center console flicks back on.

Immediately the car doors lock.

CLICK

THE BRAKE LIGHTS

Snap on.

THE STEERING WHEEL

Attempts to rip out of Max's hands, but he holds on with all his might.

Knuckles white. Straining.

Max lets out a primal roar.

IRIS
Max...

INT. IRIS HQ (LOBBY) - DAY

IRIS plows through an enormous RECEPTIONIST DESK and begins swerving out of control.

INT. IRIS - DAY

Max wrestles with the steering wheel, he can't overpower it no matter how hard he tries, but they are already going too fast to stop.

He punches the credit card he wedged in the door further in.

CLICK

His door unlocks.

MAX
Payment accepted.

With every ounce of strength he has remaining, Max kicks the driver door.

It springs open.

MAX (CONT'D)
OVERRIDE THIS SHIT!

INT. IRIS HQ (LOBBY) - DAY

Max leaps out of the moving vehicle and hits the ground hard. He tucks and rolls, sliding and tumbling across the smooth marble floor.

IRIS attempts to turn out of the way, but at this speed, FLIPS INTO THE AIR. Two tons of metal sent hurling violently, spiraling out of control.

And then...

IRIS COLLIDES into her own mainframe.

A massive EXPLOSION as if a bomb went off.

IRIS'S BRAIN shatters. All her components burst out at every angle. A huge fireball erupts followed by a shower of sparks, liquid, glass, and metal.

MAX

Covers his head from the rain of debris.

SLOW MOTION

Flames engulf IRIS'S BRAIN. The carcass of the car on fire.

Fire and smoke.

MAX looks on.

His life's work destroyed in an instant.

A beat.

EXT. IRIS HQ - DAY

Max slowly emerges from the smoke. The building now crumbling behind him.

Covered in soot, he stumbles towards Sean who throws his hands up in the air like...

What the hell just happened?

CUT TO:

INT. IRIS HQ (LOBBY) - DAY

IRIS'S BRAIN, the internal network of cables, wires, and circuitry lie destroyed on the floor in a pool of her own "blood".

Cables splayed out like cooked noodles. Pulse of lights travel swiftly along the cables, but then begin to only blink intermittently.

Slower and slower.

Until there's no more lights.

EXT. IRIS HQ - DAY

Max gets to Sean and they stare at each other blankly.

SIRENS in the distance.

Exhausted, Max sits on the hard concrete. Sean takes a seat next to his friend. They sit in silence for a minute.

IRIS HQ in ruins.

MAX
You know, I'm starting think this wasn't a good idea.

Sean holds out a small electronic contraption with a red button in his hand, its cover flipped open.

MAX (CONT'D)
The kill switch... you knew.

SEAN
I had a suspicion. And when you said, "It's my fault", I knew. When in our history have you ever taken responsibility for anything bad? Your pride would never.

MAX
Yeah, well. I sort of meant it.

Sean acknowledges.

MAX (CONT'D)
You could've hit it before...
(gestures broadly to HQ)
You know?

SEAN
You took off like a bat out of hell before I could.

Max smirks.

MAX
I did say something really cool though...

Sean perks up.

MAX (CONT'D)
(thinks)
Nah, never mind, you had to be there.

They share a laugh.

MAX (CONT'D)
Thank you... I owe you.

A beat.

SEAN
No, you owe my wife, you jerk.
(scoffs)
You're paying for our honeymoon.

Max smiles ever so slightly.

Sean produces a FLASK out of his breast pocket and shares it.

The two sit in silence as RESCUERS arrive.

FADE OUT.

THE END